

BLOWING WEATHER



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BY

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I

ANTHONY STEVENS paused on the broad door-stone of the Black Horse Tavern, and looked up and down Second Street.

It was much changed since he had seen it, years before; it was now thick-ribbed and confident; there was an assurance in the way it protruded its store windows, like well-filled bellies. But, and the young man noted this with pleasure, there was nothing stodgy in its new fatness; rather, there was that air of readiness one sees on the ordered deck of a well-mastered ship.

Second Street had been the much known street of Anthony's boyhood; his racing feet had kicked up its dust; he had spun tops on its stones; he had often followed its length away into the Northern Liberties where the woods began; from where he stood, he could see the turn he 'd taken into Vine Street of a hot afternoon, and then down to the river, to splash and shout with other young adventurers in the dock next the shipyard.

It was an autumn morning; the wind and sun were in the street, and touched one with a bright coolness. Accustomed to the heavy balm of New Orleans, Anthony felt oddly light, and brisk of foot. He crossed Sassafras Street; at the foot of Mulberry he saw the shallops tied to the corder's wharf, their lugs furled tightly, just as others like them had been, years before; and there were the same ranks of gum, and hickory, and oak, marshaled against the coming of winter, even then stirring in the North.

At Pewter Platter Alley, Anthony turned toward the river. From Front to Water Street the way narrowed, and there was a sharp descent by means of worn stone steps; the wind was chill and high on the river, and through the lessened throat of the thoroughfare whistled the reek of the docks; with it came the smell of trampled mud, of pitch and cordage, and the peppery, alien scent of cargoes from far-off places.

In Water Street, across the tops of the counting-houses, he could see the great masts of an Indiaman at Clifford's Wharf; two-wheeled drays, burdened with bundles and bales and barrels, trundled through the alleys; Anthony could hear the blocks creaking on a Liverpool packet, which shoved its sharp nose between two buildings. From the deck of a sloop-of-war taking in stores, a fife shrilled: "Come Away to Billy Cooper's."

Anthony spoke to a man engaged in heading up some kegs of salt fish.

"Where shall I find the place of business of a merchant named Magruder?" asked he. "He is engaged in the trade with New Orleans."

The man pointed with his hammer.

"He's at the head of Bickley's Wharf," said he. "Turn in here, then on past Crousillat's, and you are at his door."

Anthony thanked the man, and picked along through an alley whose stones were slippery with mud; then, on the waterfront, he made his way through the drays, the sweating horses, the piles of merchandise, to a square building standing by itself; over the door swung a faded sign: "J. Magruder, Gulf Ports and West Indies." Anthony pushed open the door, and found himself in a great, low-ceilinged room heaped with casks of rum, packs of hides, barrels of tallow, cheese, and salted pork. There were also stores of hemp and corded bales of buffalo-ropes, boxes of dried fruits, and hogsheads of tobacco. The place was dim with the bulk

of stuff that crowded it, and here and there a whale-oil lamp lighted the way among the narrow aisles.

A stout man came forward.

"Yes, sir," said he, expectantly. He valued the young man for a moment, and then said with an air of confidence, "I'll venture, sir, it is in the matter of the *Bristol Pride*."

Anthony smiled.

"Well," said he, "that good vessel has done its part in my being here; there's no denying that."

"It is a marvelous thing, sir," said the stout man, smilingly, "how news gets abroad. The *Pride* only rounded the bend an hour ago; and yet a score of gentlemen have been here already. But," and he pointed through the glass of the door to where a small brig was anchored in the stream, "it's a common saying, though, that good news travels fast; and that ship carries in her hold three pipes of as fine brandy as ever bore the stamp of the king of Spain."

"Well," said Anthony, good-humoredly, "I can well believe it. And not only the three pipes of brandy are under her hatches; there are also two puncheons of sherry that came by way of St. Kitts—a rare, brown wine, as I had occasion to notice on the levee at New Orleans, and with the sun in every drop of it."

The stout man looked at him with a changed interest.

"Am I to understand, sir, that you came as a passenger in the brig?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Anthony. "She became windbound at Newcastle yesterday; so I left her and came on by chaise."

"Your name would be Stevens, then?"

"Yes," said the young man. "Do I speak to Mr. Magruder?"

"No; I am clerk to him." Beckoning Anthony to follow, he threaded his way along one of the dim aisles toward the back of the warehouse. "Mr. Magruder is beyond, here."

They passed into a dingy counting-room where there was a tall desk with a long-legged stool, some chests, a cupboard, whose open doors showed it crammed with invoices and bills of lading, and a litter of odds and ends of things the place trafficked in.

At the desk was a stoop-shouldered man with a mean face and a sidelong look. When he heard Anthony's name he put aside the ledger he 'd had his nose in, and stood examining him in a furtive way that caused a creep of dislike through the young man's blood.

"Mr. Magruder?" asked Anthony, shortly.

The West Indian trader came forward and gave him a meager handshake.

"I have been expecting you," he said, "and but now sent aboard to ask after you. Word came back that you 'd already come ashore; in fact," as Anthony sat down, "that you 'd left the ship yesterday." Anxiety pinched his face into meaner lines than before. "I trust you have not been showing yourself a great deal in public places."

"I reached the city about dark," said the young man, stretching his legs, unconcernedly. "I took my supper at a tavern, and then went to bed."

Magruder seemed put at ease by this.

"That is as it should be," he said. He sat down facing Anthony; warmed by a thin glow of hospitality, he took from a waistcoat pocket a silver snuff-box, upon whose lid was engraved a schooner under full sail. He offered it to his visitor; when the young man refused, he took a spare pinch himself; he sat and snuffled over its bite for a long time, with great relish, meanwhile studying Anthony with the same furtive look as before.

"Your reply to my letter was handed me by the master of the ship *Loadstar*, about a month ago," he said.

"Yes, Señor Montufars said he gave it to him," said

Anthony. "You see, when your word came concerning the affairs of the firm of Rufus Stevens' Sons, I was a week's journey up the river, and Montufars was in care of my affairs. As the matter seemed urgent, he wrote to you at once, it being his thought I 'd return in time to take passage on the *Bristol Pride*."

The face of the West Indian merchant went a dirty gray as Anthony spoke.

"Do you tell me a third person answered my letter?" His voice lifted to almost a shriek; his hands were held out, clawing like talons. "Do you tell me that he read what I wrote for your eyes alone?"

The features of the man worked like one in a fit; startled, Anthony got up and went to him.

"What is it? Are you ill? Is there anything I can do?"

The frantic hands drummed upon Anthony's breast.

"Montufars is a damned Spaniard," said the trader. "He will talk. His like always does. He 'll spread the matter all about New Orleans, and it 'll come north on every ship. Good God, why did I undertake this matter!" He wrung his hands, and all but groveled in fear. "What madness induced me to put such a thing on paper—with my name to it, as a witness against me?"

The man's rat-like panic made Anthony's gorge rise, and he turned away, saying curtly:

"Try and get yourself in hand; a grown man don't give way like this, even with cause. And, God knows," impatiently, "there 's little enough cause for agitation, or anything else, in that communication of yours, if that 's what you 're afraid of. It was only a bare line or two, and even those set down in such a way as would puzzle the devil himself."

He planted himself at a window that overlooked the traffic of an alley, and stood frowning and stroking his chin.

A clock on the wall ticked monotonously; for a space this was the only sound in the room, but gradually Anthony became aware of another—a sort of sniggering; he turned and saw Magruder, still with the dirty look of fear upon him, but shaking with laughter.

“The man’s mad!” Anthony told himself. “I was a fool to give any heed to him in the first place.”

“So you found it a puzzle, did you?” chuckled the trader. “Its meaning was hard to come at, eh?” There was a slinking gratification in his voice, and his grin had in it a sort of cowering pleasure. “Of course, you did. The writing of that letter cost me a deal of trouble; I desired it to say little and you to infer much; it was framed to safeguard me against any such misadventure as that which has happened. I should have remembered that; for I have no ground for uneasiness—none, whatever.”

Anthony promptly put aside all idea of madness; he sat down, crossed his booted legs, eased himself back in his chair, and fell to studying the other with a shrewd narrowing of his eyes.

Anthony was a tall young man, lean and hard, and with a body of supple power. His face was long; but when he smiled it lit up wonderfully; his hair was trimmed short, giving him the “Brutus head” then slowly coming into fashion. There was something about him that suggested outdoors; he had the keen, ready look of one who knew the wilderness, and the savages thereof, who had faced torrent and desert, and mountains and seas, in quest of those hard-won things that are the jewels of the world’s trade.

“From what you have said,” spoke the young man, at length, “but more especially from how you’ve looked, I draw that you have a dread of being known in this matter.”

“Outside there in the docks,” said Magruder, “there are a score or more of fine, deep-water ships; on the wharves

and in the warehouses there are much rich stuffs. But if they, to the last block and spar, to the last bale and barrel, were offered me as the price of making it known that I'd brought you north, as I have, I'd refuse."

Anthony cocked a shrewd eye at him.

"That," said he, "is keeping your mouth close shut, indeed."

"It is," said the West Indian merchant. He shook a skinny, warning finger. "And if you are wise you'll be equally cautious."

Anthony pulled his chair nearer.

"I'm going to speak candidly," said he. "I've known you only for a few minutes, Mr. Magruder, but in that time you've shown me that you are a man of no great courage."

"No," admitted Magruder, readily enough. "I am none of your brawlers."

"Very good," said Anthony. "But, for all that habit of mind, you send me a letter which, according to your own view of it, has danger written across its very face."

Magruder sucked in his thin lips; his fingers began plucking at a button on the sleeve of his coat.

"There must have been an excellent reason for your venturing so much," said Anthony. "And that reason is, I think—money. For, from all I've heard of you aboard your own brig, you are a close trader, Mr. Magruder; your methods are careful; you are of the kind who think far, but hazard little."

"I am none of your wasters," said the man.

"It has been the custom of the firm of Rufus Stevens' Sons," said Anthony, "to carry outside moneys in certain of its business; and it comes to me that at some time or other you have adventured with them in a ship that's sailed, and met with misfortune."

Magruder stopped plucking at the button; his hand went

up in a trembling gesture, and his voice was sunk to almost a whisper as he said:

"Yes, you are right. I have moneys in some of your uncle's transactions; and because I've seen loss looking at me, everywhere I turned, I sent for you. There are items in my ledger that a madman might have placed there. What have I, who have scraped and struggled all my life, to do with high-colored plans that only lead aboard a vessel that never comes to port? What have I, who believe in plain, sure business, to do with letters of marque and decks crowded with hectoring ruffians? On this very desk, a year ago," and here his voice lifted in thin bitterness, "I told down one thousand gold johannes for a venture to the slave coast. And not a single blackamoor has been sold to my account anywhere in the islands."

"I'm sorry to hear this," said Anthony, "for it not only marks a serious loss to you, but it seems to show that Rufus Stevens' Sons is in shoal water."

"It was a black day for his house when your grandfather died," said Magruder. "And it was a worse one when your Creole mother coaxed your father away to Louisiana, and so left the trade and ships of the firm in the hands of your uncle."

Anthony looked perplexed.

"In New Orleans," said he, "merchants speak of my uncle with something like awe. In Havana, Martinique, and St. Kitts I've heard shipmasters tell tales of his enterprises that were like romances. If my mind has been made up to any one thing, it is that my uncle is a very prince of merchants."

"He has done fine things; he has done clever and difficult things," said the other. "I'll take no credit from him that's his due. But you are his nephew, and I'll say to you what I'd say to no one else. Let things progress as they are, and, great as is his house, it'll be that weak; rich as it

is, it 'll be that poor; splendid as are its adventures on the sea, they 'll be that defenseless."

Anthony frowned at the man.

"That has a good deal of the sound of the letter you sent me," said he. "You 've brought me a long distance to see you, Mr. Magruder, and so I think I can in all fairness expect words from you that I can make something of."

But the trader shook his head.

"Too plain speech is bad," said he. "One should never let the tongue venture where the hand dare not follow."

Anthony's boots scraped suddenly upon the floor; the chair creaked under him as he sat upright.

"The part that the hand has to do," said he, and there was a sharp cut to his voice that Magruder had not heard before, "you may leave to me. So speak up, sir, for I 'm not used to your way of doing business, and tell you plainly that I do not like it."

Again the dirty gray came into Magruder's face, and again he began to cringe.

"I can speak no plainer, because I have no plain knowledge," said he. "I can point to nothing; I can accuse no one. But," and here he crowded close to the young man, and whispered in his ear, "there is a force at work in Rufus Stevens' Sons that means ruin."

"Good God!" said Anthony, more exasperated than ever "Am I to get nothing from you at all?" He pushed the trader away, and got upon his feet. "At least," said he. "you can tell me what the thing is you are afraid of."

But Magruder shook his head.

"I do not know even that," said he.

Anthony clapped his tall beaver upon his head and buttoned up his coat,

"Good morning," said he.

But Magruder put a hand upon his arm.

“Very like,” said he, “you ’ve seen a deal, both at sea and on land. Strange things come to those who sail the ships of the world and who travel in its wilderness places. But for all that, young man, you ’ve never seen a stranger thing than you ’ll see here in this port—in the counting-room of your uncle—if you have the mind for it, and the patience to wait and watch.”

“Good morning,” said Anthony. He pushed open the door, passed through the wareroom, and so out upon the waterfront, among the trundling drays, and the wilderness of spars and rigging.

II

ANTHONY, with tight-set lips and brow gathered in a frown, turned north along the wharves. But at Girard's warehouse the way was quite narrow, because of the lengthening of the docks to accommodate the French merchant's great ships; and just now this was a sort of vortex of travel filled with sweating horses and bawling men. So, rather than risk his bones by venturing by, Anthony faced about and walked toward High Street.

Here the fish-market, familiar to the eyes of his boyhood, was roaring with trade; the trays gleamed with the catch fresh from the bay; bare-armed women cried their wares, shrilly; men in aprons and with bloody hands, scaled, and gutted, and beheaded at slate-topped tables; the fishing-sloops were still tied up at the wharf, their decks being deluged with water and lustily scrubbed by their crews.

Anthony paused. In the block below stood the warehouse of Rufus Stevens' Sons, huge, square, and with many windows. He had had no thought of going there just yet; but now a sudden impulse took him, and he walked toward it. There was no rutted road here, with its scum of foul, black mud; stones were set in, smoothly and solidly. The row of brick arches opening into the warehouse were high enough to admit a laden dray; Anthony stood in the mouth of one, and looked in. The place was like a dim, vast cavern, packed with riches and filled with aromatic smells; porters, draymen, and clerks moved about in the half-light, like gnomes; never before had Anthony been so impressed with the complete meaning of order, routine, spaciousness, wealth.

The wharves of the firm were heaped with cargo; three square-riggers were tied there; windlasses turned; seamen chanted as they threw their weight against the bars, and swung the merchandise up from the holds. Anthony looked from the ships with their abundance and ordered labor to the warehouse and its repletion, and the words of Magruder came back to his mind:

"Great as is his house, it will be that weak," Magruder had said. "Rich as it is, it will be that poor. Splendid as are its adventures on the sea, they will be that defenseless."

For all he 'd kept a set face while the words were being spoken, the young man had felt the cold drench of them; but now, with Rufus Stevens' Sons before him, he jeered at the saying. After all, the man's brain must be touched in some way, for one glance was enough to show the fatness of this house, the solidity, the reality of everything it had to do with. It would take much more than a thing which never showed itself to bring downfall here.

"Misers," said Anthony, "have mental antennæ that warn them of peril to their hoards; but, like most morbid things, they probably are not to be depended upon."

This commercial house had a record of achievement that reached back into the years of the king's governors. Its founder, old Rufus Stevens,—Anthony could remember him as a white-haired, big-bodied man, still unbroken, though in his eightieth year, and holding the lion voice that had roared his men to their posts in many a driving gale,—had, in that distant time, walked off the quarter-deck of the East India-man he 'd commanded, and on board a schooner he had bought. This craft he stowed with shrewdly bought merchandise and traded it to large advantage in the French islands. Within the same year he had taken over a second schooner and a brig; and by the time war threw the neighboring seas into a turmoil his house had taken its stand upon the very

spot where it now stood; his vessels had grown more and more numerous; his name had become known everywhere to men who followed the sea, and to men who dealt in goods that came by way of it.

From things Anthony had heard his grandfather say, old Rufus had not hated the king very greatly for his unjust laws; for his mind did not turn to such matters. But because of the harrying of the sea's trade he had stormed curses at old George that might well have made him rock on his throne. However, prowling frigates could not keep his vessels in port; they crept out, armed and crammed with goods, making for whatever place trade promised. Some fell prey to the cruisers of the enemy, but others again made through and back, laden with cargo that, in those narrowed days, was all but worth its weight in Spanish dollars. When the enemy entered the city he departed, but his trade went on, in one way or another, in other places; and no sooner was the town free of them than he was back again, pulling his power together with a strong, shrewd hand.

The thing that can broaden in the face of adversity is a strong thing; and the house of Rufus Stevens proved its strength by laying its widest and deepest foundations in stormy and uncertain times. And when the sea roads grew quiet once more the structure began to tower upon this base like magic; out of the sight of men its huge roots grew under the sea and far away, tapping populous ports, and rivers that flowed through gifted places.

The two sons of old Rufus had been bred to the trade; they had sailed in his ships and seen to his branch houses in foreign places; and their genius and industry turned an ever-increasing tide of business in the firm's direction. The horizon of the house widened; but it did not change until—and this was before the war began—the younger son sent word from New Orleans, where he had gone to encourage the

trade in furs, that he had taken to himself a wife. When old Rufus learned she was of Creole stock his lips set, and there was distrust in his flinty old eyes.

Anthony called up a picture of his beautiful young mother, with her shining hair and Spanish eyes. She had not fitted very well into the life of the sober, mercantile town when she came there; her heart was lonely; she longed for a warmer sky and a less contained people. But, and she told Anthony this more than once when he was a growing boy, she had read what was in the old man's mind. She would, so he thought, take his son away; she would take a prop from under the bulky business before it got the strength of full maturity; and by so doing she would destroy much that he had labored to build.

"I was proud," she told her son, and Anthony recalled how her eyes shone as she said it. "He despised my people. He thought them weak; he believed they could not bear up under suffering."

If this were so, she proved him wrong, for she stayed on uncomplainingly until the old man's death; then her resolution would carry her no further; her health began to break, and Anthony's father, who was devoted to her, took her back to the low, soft country she loved.

A dray, rattling over the stones and under one of the arches, roused Anthony from his thoughts. He looked about. The counting-house would, of course, face upon Water Street, and so he made his way around and presented himself therein. It was a fine, airy place with wide spaces and an air of opulent leisure. A man with an affable manner, and his graying hair done in an old-fashioned queue, glanced at him inquiringly.

"I should like," said Anthony, "to speak with Mr. Charles Stevens."

"I'm sorry," said the affable man, "but he is not in the

city at present. Could you step in at another time; or would you care to entrust me with a message?"

"I will return," said Anthony, and went out.

Here were the Newcastle sloops, with their passengers going aboard for the trip down the river. A trim schooner with a fleet-looking hull, flying the flag of the New York Packet Line, was warping into a dock near the Crooked Billet Tavern; and Anthony paused, among a group of idlers, to watch the operation. A score or more of passengers with their baggage stood upon the deck ready to come ashore.

"More of them," grumbled a stocky man at Anthony's elbow. He carried a basket of ship carpenter's tools on his shoulder, and his face wore a look of indignation. "You see them everywhere you go. The people they plundered for so many centuries won't let them stay in their own country, and they come down on us like locusts."

A man in a butcher's apron nodded.

"Not like locusts—more like hawks," said he. "Look at that old one there; if he's not like a grandfather kite with his eyes going around for something to fasten his talons in, I never saw one."

Anthony's eyes had already picked out the person referred to: an infirm old man who leaned his weight upon a stick, but whose head with its high-featured face was held up with the boldness of youth. There was a girl at his side; she was turned from Anthony and he could not see her face, but her figure and carriage were superb; the hand that held the old man's arm was slim and white and wonderful. There was something in her poise, in her movements, that said "Youth," "Beauty," as plainly as tongue could have said it; so, with his fancy instantly taken, Anthony worked his way down upon the wharf, and there, hands behind his back and with a carefully careless air, he waited.

The skilful hands of the sailors made the schooner fast,

the planks were run aboard, and the passengers and travelers were set ashore. There was a small din of carters as they fought for the chests, parcels, and bags—scuffle, flurry and dust for a moment; then all settled again, and they were gone. Craftily, Anthony bided his time; then, right to a hair's-breadth, he put out a hand and helped the old Frenchman ashore, for which he received a "Je vous remercie, monsieur," from the old man, and a glance, though a brief one, from what he thought the most splendid eyes he had ever seen. He stood near by while they talked with the only remaining carter. They were strangers in the city; they were going to the Half Moon; they had expected some one to meet them and were somewhat dismayed to find that no one had. During this, Anthony diligently scanned the river at the bend in the very closest manner, as though expecting a vessel in whose appearance he was gravely concerned to round it at any moment.

A young man here flung himself up through the companion-way of the schooner with the agility and sureness of an acrobat. He was a big young man and seemed very much excited; a glance showed him that all the porters and carters were gone, and he ripped out a string of curses, threw a heavy pair of saddle-bags ashore, and leaped after them. Paying no attention whatever to the old man and the girl, he said sharply to the man who was engaged with their effects.

"Get those bags and drive me to the nearest tavern where there is fit food and drink."

The carter was a settled, family sort of man, with a subdued look.

"I'm sorry, sir," said he, "but I've already engaged to carry this lady and gentleman to the Half Moon."

The young man was very big of chest and square of face; he had a curt manner, and an eye that was good-humored

rather than otherwise; but it was plain that he was not the sort of person to permit himself to be inconvenienced by any foolish notion of precedence. He looked at the old man and then at the girl; and his laugh showed his fine teeth.

"Pick up those bags and let us have no more words about it," said he to the carter. "This gentleman is much too old to be in the haste I am, and the lady," with a nod of his handsome head, and a smile, "much too beautiful to worry about a moment more or less."

"It may be," said the pacific carrier, "that I can carry you all. The cart is large, as you see, and—"

The hectoring young man smiled good-humoredly, and threw his saddle-bags into the conveyance.

"Now," commanded he, "in with you, before I take you by the neck."

Overpowered by the assurance of the other, the man was about to do as bidden; but the girl came forward, spiritedly.

"Monsieur," she said, "the conveyance is ours. I am very sorry, but you 'll have to look elsewhere—or await the man's return."

"Await!" The big man smiled at her good-humoredly. "Dear lady, you don't know what you are saying. I never wait for anything. And just now I 'm so sick of that accursed packet's food that I 'm in all haste to get something fit for the human palate. So bear with me, I beg of you." With a push of the hand he threw the carter against the wheel of his cart. "Up with you!" laughed he. "Are you going to keep me here all day?"

The carter climbed to his seat and took the reins; the big young man was about to follow him when the girl spoke once more, her fine eyes full of indignation.

"It seems to be your way to carry a high-handed act off with a pleasant manner. This does not make your purpose

any easier to bear, though you seem to think it should; but, being a woman, there is no way but words in which I can show my resentment."

The young man, with one foot on the hub of the wheel, nodded pleasantly.

"At any rate," said he, "you have the spirit. I admire that, and wish you good luck. Also, I hope you 'll not be delayed longer than is necessary." He climbed up to the seat, and said to the driver, "Get on!"

The girl clenched her hands; and then her eyes met those of Anthony. Again it was only for an instant; he did n't stop to consider all he saw there, but thrust one long arm into the conveyance and flung the saddle-bags to the ground. Then to the old Frenchman he said quietly:

"Are these your things, sir? Allow me to see them placed."

With that he tossed the pieces of baggage into the cart; and while he was so doing the big young man stepped down and watched him. When Anthony had done and was dusting off his hands with a blue silk pocket-handkerchief, the other said:

"That was neatly done, and promptly, too. Mademoiselle," and he smiled at the girl, "I can see you 've found favor with this young man. He wears the manner always worn by gallants performing under the eyes of beauty."

He looked amusedly at Anthony, and placed himself so in the way that that young gentleman was prevented from handing the girl into the cart. Frowning blackly, Anthony lurched against and drove him to one side; then the girl was in the cart, and the old man with her ready help was following, when Anthony felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder. Though he expected a blow, he did not turn; with jaw set he saw the aged Frenchman safe, and called to the driver, "Be off!" The man shook the reins, and the cart started; Anthony

swept off his tall hat; he saw the anxious look in the girl's eyes, and the gesture of protest from the old man at so deserting him; then he whirled about with a scowl, and found himself looking into the square, good-humored face of the man with the saddle-bags.

"Well," said this person, and he looked Anthony from head to foot, "you have a way of your own, haven't you?"

Anthony threw the hand from his shoulder.

"I can return the saying," replied he. "And let me tell you further, sir, I consider it a damned, detestable way!"

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed the other. He roared with laughter, and followed it up with a string of delighted oaths. "You are vexed! You are displeased; and right on the heels of such prompt and engaging conduct." He looked at Anthony and roared again. Then, gasping, he stooped, took up his saddle-bags, and threw them over his shoulders. "By God!" said he, "I haven't laughed so much in a twelve-month. It's a pity I can't have more of your society. But that," regretfully, "has always been my fate; exigency has always forced me to turn my back upon good entertainment. Upon my soul," he said, "I never saw the like of it outside a comedy! 'A damsel in distress!' says you; 'to the rescue!' Then out goes my luggage, aside go I, and into my place go they, as nice as you please." He filled his big chest with air, and made the place ring; then wagging his head, and stamping for very joy he made his way up the wharf, leaving Anthony scowling after him and biting his lip.

III

ANTHONY spent an hour walking about the waterfront, but somehow its interest did not hold. He felt that he 'd like to rest, to be quiet; a chair at an inn took an unaccountable place in his thoughts, a chair at a window in which he saw himself sitting, quiet in the knowledge that some bits of savory cooking were going forward for his especial benefit.

"And the Black Horse is so far away," he thought, the few blocks between himself and the old tavern taking on the magnitude of leagues. "Perhaps it would be better if I took lodgings at a place nearer to the center of things." Then the urge behind the thought showed itself, though Anthony, poor youth, was unaware of it. "The Half Moon is well located," he said. "And it should be an excellent house, for well-conditioned people seem to patronize it."

As he proceeded, facing north, the possibilities of the Half Moon grew in his mind. He saw a snug corner, with the light of many candles falling upon a bountifully spread table. It was night, and it had turned cold; a cheerful fire snapped in the grate. There was a glass of mulled ale before him, with a comforting vapor arising from it, and across the rim of the glass he saw a pair of eyes. They were the most liquid eyes he 'd ever seen—brown, he thought—brown, and deep—as deep as a pool brimming with early sunlight.

In Water Street, near to Mulberry, was a low stone house with a wide door and two flag steps that led down to it. In a window, paned with small squares of glass, there hung great bunches of herbs, gray and dried, and roots that

stretched crookedly about as though in search of moisture. Anthony instantly descended the two steps, bowed his head so that he might avoid scraping the nap of his beaver against the fan-light, and went in. The place was large and low-ceilinged, and heavy with medicinal smells. From hooks in the walls hung more bundles of herbs and roots; shelves were stored with little packets of bark; in bottles and jars were the seeds and flowers of many virtuous plants. A little active old man, with horn-rimmed spectacles, came forward; he rubbed the bald top of his head with one hand and surveyed his visitor with mild attention.

“What can I serve you with, sir?” said he.

Anthony bent over the oaken counter and presented his face for inspection.

“Look at me,” said he.

The little man ceased from rubbing his head.

“I am not a doctor of physic,” stated he, regretfully, “and, so I cannot pronounce upon a complaint with authority. But,” and his face was screwed into an expression of much sagacity, “as you look like a normal youth, I would venture that the thing you suffer is the plague. It still visits hereabout, and we’ve had great misgivings of it all summer through. If you feel your vitals at all grasped by this ailment, I entreat you, sir, to keep from gunpowder and ardent spirits.” And, as Anthony nodded and smiled, the little apothecary went on, earnestly: “The spirits, I grant you, have a place in *materia medica*, as a glowing, forceful agent; they contain the life principle of the subject from which they are drawn, and to be fortified in time of need with the life principle of anything whatsoever may be considered an advantage. But the gunpowder, sir, I cannot grant you. What serves it to rattle away with a fowling-piece at the bedside of a disabled person? You make a noise, and a stink, and nothing more.”

"What," said Anthony, "makes you think I have the plague?"

"You do not look," said the little man, "like one with a complaint of long duration. As you are sick, I take it that it is with something that has seized you suddenly. And so it *must* be the plague. I would, if my advice were sought, recommend camphor—a very white substance, unctuous, pellucid, bitterly aromatic, with a grateful coolness, and a fragrance not unlike rosemary. This may be inhaled upon suitable occasions; I have known many persons to carry little bags of it slung under their noses in time of great fright, or small quantities may be taken, dissolved in spirits of wine."

"I am not ill," said Anthony, as he seated himself upon the edge of the counter. "I have never been so, not even in the days when I'd tramp, barefooted, away beyond Schuylkill, into the woods and fields, to search out wormwood, Jerusalem oak and adder's-violet. It may be," he mused, "that I'd then met with broken bones or drowning in the streams, but I was carefully looked after by one who was my good friend. Though, indeed, friends slip from one," and Anthony pulled a deep sigh. "Even those who we thought would remember the longest sometimes have memories short enough."

The little apothecary rubbed his bald head and stared; then incredulity, amazement, conviction followed each other across his face. He put a hand upon Anthony's arm.

"It is not Anthony Stevens!" denied he. "Do not tell me it is Anthony Stevens; for if you do I shall not believe you."

"Who was it told you that false valerian could be found in the swamps near the second ford?" asked the young man. "What boy was it who could find more wax-myrtle than his teacher? Who was it once slept all the way home on a bag of bear's-bed in the bottom of the wagon because he thought if bears could——"

"Anthony!" The little apothecary had him by the hand. "Anthony!" The mild old eyes took in the strapping frame, so different from that of the boy he had once known—the well-poised head, the purposeful eyes and chin. "Yes, it's you. I know you when you laugh. Nothing could change that."

"Christopher," said Anthony, and his big paw squeezed the thin one tightly, and his eyes beamed, "you have not changed at all. You are not fatter; you have no more hair upon your head; you are just the same human, interested man you were, years and years ago."

"As for being human," said Christopher Dent, "why not, since I have around me in their natural concentrated forms all the organic elements upon which humanity is founded? Age is not a hard thing to check when one breathes constantly those fragrances which regulate the action of the system. I could do with more hair upon my head," a little ruefully; "but," with immediate cheeriness, "we'll let that pass, for what signifies hair? It is but a horny growth, meant to protect the skull, which is the casket of the brain, in those times when the world had not yet reached the point of hats."

He then invited Anthony into a little room, a sort of laboratory, at the back of the shop, in which were a brick furnace, a still in operation, crucibles, mortars, jars of various colored liquids, and bladders filled with powders.

"Sit down," said old Christopher, as he took some dusty, sheep-covered books from a stool. "Sit down and tell me how it has been with you these many years."

Anthony sat down; and the little apothecary sat near him, a shaft of noonday light from a window dazzling upon the crown of his head.

"I have seen your uncle, of course, many times since," said he. "But in what talk I've had with him he never mentioned you."

"I suppose," said Anthony, "he had nothing to tell. There was a difference between my father and him—nothing serious, but still a difference—at the time of the separation of their interests. I don't think a half-dozen letters passed between them afterwards, I know they never saw each other again."

The old apothecary clicked his tongue pityingly.

"Such wretched states of mind people permit themselves to get into," said he. "There was no reason why, if your mother desired to go back to her native land, that your father should not sell out his interest and take her away."

"I think, from the little I've heard my father say,—for he seldom mentioned it,—my uncle understood and agreed to all that. But what he disliked was the sudden curtailing of the firm's operations because of the moneys that had gone out of it."

Old Christopher nodded.

"Yes, yes; Charles is like that. He thinks in a large way. I've fancied sometimes that the eyes of his mind are so fashioned that they cannot see anything under a given size. But," coming back to the subject with a sudden brightening of manner, "what of yourself? What have you been doing? Tell me everything about it. I'm sure it's of interest, for you were always full of that." The old man laughed, and the sound had a clear ring, surprisingly like that of a boy. "It once would have taken a dozen to keep track of you."

Anthony told him the story of his transplanting; of the ship that had taken them, and all their household effects, down the Delaware, and up the Mississippi; of New Orleans and the pirate Spaniards who held its customs and dwarfed the port; of the quaint old streets; of the mingling of races; the color and strangeness of life there; of the mission-school,

where the good padres had taken him in hand much to his advantage; of his father's losses in business, caused by the tricky methods of the port authorities, and then of his death. His mother had lived a year longer; then she, too, had died.

"The money, then," said Christopher, "is gone."

"All of my father's—yes," replied Anthony. "They stripped him to the bones. But there is still the interest in Rufus Stevens' Sons, left me by my grandfather; that had never been disturbed. The income from it made my mother comfortable while she lived."

"And when she had gone,—fine, proud, beautiful creature,—what then?"

"I sailed as mate in a Spanish ship, trading with South America and ports on the West Coast; for a year or two I was in the counting-house of Montufars, a trader at New Orleans. Three times I crossed the mountains and desert with fur-buying trains, to California; and, on the same errand, I've navigated the Mississippi and tributaries to places, so they've told me, where white men had not been seen."

"You *would* do that," said the apothecary, nodding his glittering head. "As a boy you always loved to venture where no one had been before you." He looked at the young man with his manner of mild attention. "And now you've come back to where you were born," he said. "To stay, I hope; to take your place in the business of your grandfather."

Anthony shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know as to that," he replied. "It's true I have no ties in New Orleans; and I will do as well in one place as another. But my uncle is a man of sharp-cut achievements, and it may be that he'll be content enough if I keep my distance." And, though Anthony laughed at this, his chin went out in a way it had. "If he's of that frame of

mind I'll be willing to do so; for I have affairs enough of my own to keep me busy, and a little effort will add to them from time to time."

Here the shop door was heard to open and shut; a brisk step sounded, and a gentleman of immaculate dress entered the rear room.

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Dent," said this personage, seeing Anthony.

"It is no matter," said the apothecary. "Come in, Dr. King. I'm chatting with an old friend; that's all."

Dr. King smiled and nodded to the young man.

"Physicians," said he, "are sometimes more urgent in their ways than most; but then their affairs are of a nature that frequently requires it."

"I can well understand that, sir," said Anthony.

The apothecary gave to Dr. King several small packets done in white paper.

"*Marrubium vulgare*," said he. "*Cynoglossum officinale*."

"Quite right," said Dr. King. "I am glad you have them ready, for I am on my way to visit Mr. Moss now."

"He has a bleeding of the lungs, I am told," said Christopher, with his shining head to one side. "That is a serious condition; and of the two remedies I would venture to maintain that *Cynoglossum officinale* contains the most virtue." He turned to Anthony. "Hound's-tongue," said he. "Do you remember? The leaves are hoary, with soft down on both sides; the flowers are in clusters—"

"And the fruit," said Anthony, "a depressed achenium."

"Quite right," said the apothecary, pleasure in his face. "Quite right."

Dr. King laughed.

"So," said he, to Anthony, "you, too, have been inducted into the mysteries of Hygeia."

"If his life had not been ordered differently," said Christopher, with regret, "he would have been an excellent apothecary." Then, suddenly: "Why, what am I thinking of? Dr. King, this is a nephew of a very close friend of yours—Mr. Anthony Stevens."

The physician looked at the young man in surprise; then he held out his hand.

"I am glad to see you," said he. "I also knew your father quite well—and your mother. Have you been long in the city?"

"Since yesterday, only," replied Anthony.

"Have you seen your uncle?"

"No. I *did* visit his counting-house, but he was not there."

There was a moment's pause, and Dr. King seemed about to go.

"As you are freshly arrived," said he; "you may have nothing to occupy your time this evening."

"There is nothing," said Anthony.

"Perhaps," said Dr. King, "you 'd care to take supper with me—at six?"

"I should be pleased," said the young man.

"There will be a few people whom you may enjoy meeting. And it may be I'll be able to be of service to you." The speaker nodded to the old apothecary, and shook Anthony's hand again. "Remember, at six. My house is in Front Street just a little way above the booking-place of the Trenton stage."

When the doctor had gone, Christopher Dent said:

"A great friend of your uncle's—a most intimate friend. In fact, I would dare say that, as physician and associate, he knows more of his doings and dealings than any one else."

At once, in that recess at the back of the mind where Anthony's discarded thoughts were kept, the imaginings of Magruder began to squirm and play for light.

“Does he, indeed?” said Anthony.

Of course, Dr. King’s saying that he might be of service to him was a well-intentioned politeness; but there were times—and Anthony had seen more than one of them—when a politeness had been turned to a very practical account.

IV

THAT afternoon Anthony had his chest and other baggage transferred to the Half Moon, which was in Chestnut Street, opposite the state-house. Toward evening he began to dress for his visit to Dr. King; through the window of his room, and, again, through the high-shouldered arches at each side of the old building across the way, he caught specks of green among the flags; stout, gray Quakers paced slowly by, on their ways from their places of business at the waterside to the green open spaces, in the neighborhood of Eighth Street.

Anthony had a taste for dress, and on this occasion was exceedingly careful. His tall, long-napped beaver was brushed and "laid"; his neck-cloth, stiff with starch,—a new mode among the young men of the time,—caught him tightly under the ears. His square-skirted, high-collared coat of Lincoln green had gilt buttons on the breast and sleeves; his waistcoat was of silk and fitted snugly; his pantaloons—an article of wear flung before the world by the French Revolution—were strapped tightly down under his varnished boots. Older men were still holding to knee shorts, worsted stockings, and buckled shoes; some continued to powder their hair; but progressive youth had been caught up by the rush of the revolution, and their thoughts seemed set not only against old forms in government but in dress as well.

There was a public room at the Half Moon, and when Anthony descended he turned into it. The floor was sanded, and there were settles and chairs arranged comfortably about; a fire of chestnut knots crackled in a wide fireplace; upon

pegs in the wall hung traveling-coats, saddle-bags, and whips; people lounged about and drowsed, or talked in little groups, or read the scant journals by the light of whale-oil lamps. The young man stood in the doorway and searched the room for those whom he hoped to see; but he was disappointed. Then he walked its length, slowly, examining every one present. No, the old Frenchman, and—was it his daughter?—of the New York packet, were not there. He then went into the room on the opposite side of the passage, where the tables were laid for the tavern's hearty supper; but it was too early; none among the guests had yet considered food.

There was a short man with a jolly red face seated upon a bench in the passage; he wore a waterproof hat and held a whip between his knees. Anthony nodded to him, and the round face at once took on the look of a rosy moon.

"The inn seems very well filled," said Anthony.

"It always is," the red-faced man replied. And then, "Are you a stranger in the city, sir?"

"Practically so," said Anthony.

The stout man spoke in a low tone of confidence.

"Senators make this their place of entertainment," he told Anthony. "A justice of the Supreme Court is now drinking in the bar."

"A deal of travel halts here, I'd say," hinted Anthony.

"You say truth, then. I drive a-many here myself; but the public coaches also make it a place of call."

"The sloops and schooners from up and down the river also bring many patrons?" said Anthony.

"The New York packet brought two to-day," said the red-faced man. "An elderly gentleman and his daughter. They are French, I would say. Name of Lafargue. I drove them to Mrs. Craigie's a while ago."

"Then they have left the inn!" exclaimed Anthony.

"For a little space only." The man took out a thick watch

of silver and consulted it carefully. "In some hours more," said he, "I shall be going after them."

The brief autumn twilight was settling into dark when Anthony left the tavern. He trudged toward Front Street at a good pace; the Trenton stage was midway in the block above Mulberry Street, and he had no trouble in finding the house of Dr. King—a wide, well-kept building of red brick with white stone steps and hitching-post, and black, varnished rails.

Dr. King greeted him cordially and led him into a thickly carpeted room, with Eastern hangings, and a chandelier, glittering with a score of wax-lights. Mrs. King was a tall woman, stately, with a fine-cut face and an ease of manner not usual with women of the young republic.

"I knew your mother," she told Anthony. "A beautiful, dark creature, who loved your father." She searched his face with her quiet eyes. "No," she said, "you don't look in the least like her. You resemble your grandfather; you have his way of holding your head; you have the same strong-looking body, and the same long face." Anthony smiled at this, and she added quickly: "I was wrong; *that* is your mother's; and I'm very glad to see it. It's a fine thing to be a man like old Rufus Stevens; but, at the same time, a little softness does not come amiss."

There were some others in the room, and she led Anthony forward.

"Mr. Anthony Stevens," she said, "a nephew of Charles." To Anthony she added: "Mr. Whitaker, and Mr. Sparhawk."

Both these gentlemen arose and shook Anthony by the hand. Whitaker was about his own age, very handsome, with a great head of curling hair and snappy dark eyes. He was something of a dandy; his fine neck-cloth was of amazing height and stiffness; his buckskin pantaloons were so tight

about the knees that one wondered how he moved; his claret-colored coat had a huge roll to both collar and lapels, and his waistcoat was of corded silk, with wide flaps over the pockets.

"It 's a great pleasure to see you," said this young gentleman, examining Anthony with a careful and rather approving eye. "Did n't know Stevens had a nephew. Don't think I ever heard him say."

Sparhawk was about sixty, a small, perky man, in knee shorts, and with white powder dusted into his hair. He was dry of manner, with a shrewd, yet kindly, eye; there was no man in the port held in higher esteem among merchants. When there was a question of insurances, one went to Sparhawk; and the adjustments he made were always reckoned fair and worthy, and the best that could be done for all concerned.

"You would be Robert's son," said he. "I recall you well as a boy. A very active boy," to the others. "Given to such things as diving from the rigging of any ship in the docks he managed to get aboard of."

When they had settled down once more, Whitaker crossed his tightly clad legs and said:

"You 'll not like it here. It 's a devil of a place, I find. Since I came back I can think of nothing but getting away again."

Mrs. King laughed amusedly.

"I 'm afraid, Tom," she said, "they spoiled you by keeping you so long in foreign parts."

"They opened my eyes," returned Whitaker. "They gave me some chance to see what the world is like."

"I have been a matter of six voyages," said Sparhawk, in his precise way. "And I have been a general agent in as many ports from time to time. And this I have learned: the ports of the world are not *the* world."

"Very well," said Whitaker, composedly. "Whatever they are, I like them. Calcutta, now!" said he, to Anthony. "There's a place for you! Were you ever in Calcutta?"

"No," said Anthony.

"You should go there," said the other. "You should, by all means. It's an astonishing place. I was there three months—for Stevens; you never put your eyes on such a cargo as I stowed into the *Sea Mew*. Riches was no name for it. It was prodigious. Unfortunate she went down, though. Too bad."

"She was lost, then?" said Anthony.

"Yes; never heard of her after the day she sailed for home. Great pity. She was a magnificent ship; and the loss was murderous to the insurance people."

"You had more misfortunes than that, had you not?" said Sparhawk. "Was there not a Stevens vessel, out of Lisbon for Liverpool, carrying ivory and wine? The *Two Brothers*, I think."

Whitaker wrinkled his brows.

"Yes," said he. "The *Two Brothers*. A fairly lucky ship, too. Quick voyages and good returns. I went in her to Lisbon with a mixed cargo from the Malayan ports, just after the *Sea Mew* sailed. I expected to come home in her, but things got tangled, somehow; they took in the Liverpool merchandise, and I was sent off to Brest to see to some matters there. Devilish odd how things come about, isn't it? There's no doubt but the thing saved my life. If I had n't been sent there I'd have gone down with the ship. But who sent me, I don't know. The word was given in an indirect way. I tried to trace it afterwards; but it seems it was all a mistake; no one was responsible."

Sparhawk pursed his lips and regarded Whitaker interestedly; and then, after a moment, he fell to calculating.

"There was a matter of twelve thousand English pounds

went down in the *Two Brothers*," said he, striking a total; "and in the *Sea Mew* I think it was more."

"It was much more," admitted Whitaker. "I would say twice as much." He shook his head of hair, and looked somewhat bewildered. "It was a deal of money to scatter over the bottom of the sea," said he. "I'm glad I had nothing to do with it."

Anthony studied the young dandy. He had an engaging appearance; and there was about him that superficial air of knowing that usually comes of experiences lightly felt. His mouth was pleasant, but it had little resolution; his eyes were quick, but there was no promise that they saw anything below the surface.

But as Anthony's glance went to Sparhawk he saw something greatly different. Here was resolution enough for twenty; here was a quiet, persevering mind, a man whose interest was plainly in those things not easily seen. And this matter of the sunken ships seemed to engage him shrewdly; it seemed to Anthony it must be a subject that he'd occasion to consider more than once before.

"From Brest I think you came home," said Sparhawk.

"Yes," said Whitaker. "But my experience there was none of the pleasantest. I delivered certain papers to the house's representative, Lafargue, by name, and they occasioned a great scurrying of one kind or another, though I never knew why." Sparhawk smiled primly, and Whitaker, who noticed it, looked annoyed. "It seems to me," he went on resentfully, "when a man is entrusted with a firm's business, there should be no withholding of any sort. No, I'll confess I did n't enjoy Brest overmuch."

"Did you say the representative at that port was named Lafargue?" asked Anthony, with interest.

"Yes, an oldish man, with quite a formidable nose, and an

eye that would bore you through and through. And that reminds me," added the dandy, "who should I run across to-day at the coffee-house but this same gentleman. I have no notion what brings him to America; I talked with him for some moments, but he can be very reticent when he so desires. I learned that at Brest."

Dinner-parties of that day were not managed with the same care as in these. They were usually an indulgence of men, who ate liberally and drank heavily. Cookery was a thing given some attention, though table arrangements were simplicity itself. But Dr. King had a taste for such things; also, he had the generous nature that prompts frequent entertainment, and the large wealth that makes it possible.

Anthony found the table laid with fine napery; the silver and glass and delicate ware shone handsomely under the carefully set candlelight. As was customary, all the dishes were placed upon the table at the one time, and each guest was expected to help his neighbor.

There were a fragrant soup of leeks, and the head and shoulders of a fine cod, with Madeira. A brace of plump, black ducks lay upon a long dish; there were roasted venison, deep vessels of parsnips, and celery, and jelly in cunning molds. A fine, full-flavored Burgundy was drunk with the game. Upon a huge platter was a turkey poult, brown and full-breasted, ringed by roasted oysters and rice-patties; wherever a vacant place showed itself upon the cloth were placed dishes of marrow pudding, cherry-tarts, and pippins, stewed, and thick with cream.

It was perhaps nine o'clock when Sparhawk left; and a little later Whitaker followed him. After a space Mrs. King left the doctor and Anthony together at the table with a bottle between them, and each drawing at a long-stemmed pipe. Anthony said:

"I 've always understood the house of Rufus Stevens' Sons to be wide-flung, but, somehow, I 'm continually being surprised at the evidences of it."

A soft-footed black servant came in, snuffed the candles, put a fresh log upon the fire, and disappeared.

"And any recollections I have of my uncle," added Anthony, "are based on impressions carried away with me as a boy."

Dr. King smiled, but at the same time there was a grave look in his eyes.

"Upon the whole," said he, "those things might be a very fair base upon which to form a judgment of him. For if there ever has been a man who took what may be called the spirit of boyhood into his after life it is your uncle."

Anthony looked at him questioningly, and the doctor went on.

"Your father was always the thoughtful one, as a lad; I remember that quite well. His sums were always done methodically; his maps were drawn with care. Charles was your slap-dash fellow. A great reader, but of romances, of obscure histories, of the lives of men whose doings, as set down, do not often meet the common eye. Your father, as a boy, formed a plan for his work and went through with it, conscientiously. Charles loved to browse and dream; and then his mind would suddenly leap into life, and carry out some extraordinary idea. He does this still."

"What you are telling me does not make a usual equipment for a merchant," said Anthony.

"No," replied Dr. King. "And it is an equipment that has made many a circumspect dealer stand aghast. But, in spite of his seeming lack of qualifications as a merchant, Charles is a magnificent one. He detests plodding; he hates detail; with routine he will have nothing to do. I doubt if any one has ever seen him foot up a column of figures or

turn to a ledger for a point of information; yet no man anywhere is more possessed of the spirit of commerce. But it is commerce as a pageant, as a spectacle, a wide, spirited vision, rich with color, alive with movement, remarkable with discovery. There is nothing of the huckster in Charles; he is no mere chafferer or trafficker in commodities. In his mind ships are not dull things of oak, stuffed with cargo; they are the laden argosies of the world, crossing the seven seas, their sails filled with glory."

Anthony's eyes shone.

"Why," said he, "I think I understand that."

"The rich ports of history are the most frequent stopping-places of his mind," proceeded Dr. King. "Even as a schoolboy this was so. While other lads took delight in the doings of the military heroes of antiquity, Charles took to sea in the galleys of the Phenician merchants, searching out new lands, new peoples, new trade. While the others thrilled with the story of Thermopylæ, his gaze was fixed upon Tyre, with its great docks, its famed factories of purple, its crowding ships. His companions listened with pleasure to the voice of Cato pronouncing the doom of Carthage in the Roman senate; but Charles saw only the passing of a wondrous people, who had carried commerce to a point never previously touched in history. Venice he looked upon with almost idolatry; here the manufacturer, the merchant, the trader had lifted themselves to the places of kings; the hardy enterprise of the Genoese seafarers gained his unbounded admiration, and he never tired talking of them. But Prince Henry of Portugal was his hero; from amid the batterings of a war that had gone on for many generations, he saw this mind arise and fill with its dream of the rich regions beyond Sahara. While other boys of his age were hurry-skurrying through some rough, healthful sport, Charles, with his lame foot, would sit silent; in his mind he would enter the lonely

tower at Cape St. Vincent, as the prince had so often done; and while the gray sea threw itself against the desolate headland he'd brood upon its avenues and the possibility of traversing them to India, the land of his desire."

"Well," said Anthony, as he fired the tobacco in his pipe at one of the candles. "I now see the foundation of some of the things I've heard said of him."

"These dreams of his," said Dr. King, "he has carried with him through life. He does not plot nor contrive in his business; things rush upon him like inspirations. His ships are the stanchest, the fleetest, and have the greatest capacity of any in the port; his suggestions to the builders made them so, though many a head was shaken over them before the sea and the wind proved his word. These same ships have sailed on many a voyage which crafty mariners looked upon as folly; but Charles Stevens has a way of turning bad into good, and causing avoided places to teem with riches."

"I find myself with a great desire to meet my uncle," said Anthony, with a smile. "Christopher Dent says you are upon intimate terms with him, and yet you talk of his doings as though he were a hero of legend. It is only a very remarkable man who can inspire a thing like that."

The physician looked at the young man through the haze of curling tobacco smoke that drifted between them; and there was a shadow upon his face.

"What I have told you," said he, "are the facts as a good many know them. But, if necessary, I could speak of other things of which only little is known, and that to a very few."

Once more the cringing figure of Magruder came into Anthony's mind, the gray of fear in his mean face, and unintelligible words upon his lips.

"These things," said Anthony to the doctor, "would, I suppose, not be so favorable as the others?"

"No," said Dr. King. He sat looking at Anthony steadily

for a space; then he added, "How long do you mean to remain in the city?"

"I don't know. It will, I think, altogether depend upon circumstances."

Dr. King nodded. His eyes were still upon the young man, a look of speculation in them. He studied the well-set head, the clear eye, the long face, with its strong jaw, so like that of old Rufus. His glance took in the supple power of the body buttoned so tightly into the coat of Lincoln green, and the strong, ready hands that rested upon the arms of his chair.

"You could, if you would, remain here?" said he.

"I could."

Dr. King put down his pipe and leaned across the table.

"You never saw me before to-day," said he; "but I am your friend. I am your uncle's friend." He paused a moment, and then went on: "Do not go away. Stay here. You may be able to do nothing; and, then again, you may be able to do a great deal."

"What?" demanded Anthony, and the out-thrust chin seemed to point at the man leaning toward him.

Dr. King settled back into his chair; the aggressive chin, the stubborn frown knotted between Anthony's eyes seemed to bring him to a sudden decision.

"If you are shrewd," said the doctor, "you may be able to prevent great losses upon land and sea. If you have courage you may stop death itself as it enters your uncle's house."

"What losses threaten his goods?" asked Anthony.

"What hand is lifted against his life?"

"I know there have been losses," said Dr. King, "and instinct tells me there is danger. But I know nothing definite; I could not point to anything; I could not make an accusation that would stand reasoning over. And yet I am confident as I am that I'm speaking to you that you are needed at Rufus Stevens' Sons. Take the place that's yours in the

counting-room; keep your eyes open; tell no one why you are there—*no one*, mind you; and, who knows? you may come to the bottom of a detestable state of affairs.”

“Then there is no immediate danger?”

“No.”

Anthony pondered, pressing the black ash into the pipe bowl with his forefinger.

“I will stay,” said he, at last.

V

THAT night was not a very comfortable one for Anthony. He lay awake for a long time, his straightforward mind laboring with the facts of the day; when he did finally drop off, his sleep was not a deep one; it was thronged with grotesque images, and incidents that caricatured what he had seen and heard.

Once he awoke. It was a moon-lit night; through the window he could see the bell swinging in the tower across the way; he reasoned that it had just done striking, and the blows had awakened him. He tried to see the hour by his watch, but could not; so he arose and took it to the window. It was one o'clock. He stood moodily looking down into the street so silvered and quiet; from somewhere, a long way off, came the rumble of wheels and the notes of a coach horn; and he shivered as he thought of the harassed passengers, beginning a journey in the thin chill of the night.

He was about to turn from the window when a movement caught his eye in the shadow cast by the tower; it was a dim, leisurely movement, and well toward the edge, where the shadow met the moonlight sharply. Almost at once he saw its nature; the figures of two men came into the light and paused. They seemed on the point of separating, and the pause was for a parting word. They shook hands with the quick, hard clutch of persons well satisfied, and each turned away. But one, he who had faced eastward in the direction of the river, suddenly paused.

There was something familiar to Anthony in the gesture

that stopped the other man; and the two joined once more in talk. However, it was but for a moment. The man with the familiar gesture seemed to ask a question, which the other answered, and in so doing lifted his hand and pointed at Anthony's window. The first man threw back his head; a ringing laugh broke the stillness, and Anthony at once recognized him; it was the man with the saddle-bags who had come ashore that morning from the New York packet.

Anthony watched the two separate; the one held steadily toward the river; the other crossed the street toward the inn; and a moment later Anthony heard the outer door open and close. He stood for a moment in the center of the floor and pondered; there was something in the scene he had just witnessed which started a cold shuddering in his blood—the same feeling he 'd experienced on many a night as the wilderness closed around him, and he knew the shadows were peopled with gliding forms, each bearing a weapon that might let out his life.

But this was civilization! This was the capital city of the nation! The two men may have been cronies, detained somewhere by the flavor of a particular bottle. How was he to be sure that it was his window at which the man who had entered the inn had pointed? There were other windows; it may have been one of those. But, even though it had been his, what did it signify? A hundred reasons, each entirely innocent, might account for the gesture. The fancy that the thing held a danger amused his reason; but still the creeping continued in his blood, and instinct rang its warning in his pulse. He went to his chest, threw open the lid, and took out a heavy, knotted walking-stick, iron-shod and formidable. He was balancing this in his hand and regarding it from under frowning brows when he caught the sound of a light foot in the hall; it paused at his door; his head went up, and, clutching the cudgel, he stood listening.

The latch lifted softly; there was an instant's pause, and then the door began to push inward. Anthony saw a young man with a tall hat, a fashionably cut coat, with metal buttons, small-clothes, and shoes that had silver buckles. He carried himself very erect and with perfect composure. Closing the door after him, he advanced to the bedside, and took a chair. It was plain that in the uncertain light of the room, to which his eyes were not accustomed, he fancied the bed occupied, for he bent his head forward and addressed it.

"Now," said he, "if you 'll be good enough to wake up, I 'll have a few important words with you."

There was a pause, as he waited for the stirring of the sleeper; none followed, and he reached out his hand. As it met with only empty sheets, he exclaimed impatiently; and then out of the semi-darkness came the voice of Anthony.

"Perhaps," said he, "a little candlelight might improve matters."

"Oh," said the intruder, turning with perfect composure toward the sound, "so you are there? I took it for granted that at this hour you 'd be abed."

Anthony struck a light and touched it to the wick of a candle; then, the knotted stick in his hand, he stood glowering at his visitor.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said the man. He placed his tall hat upon a table, and seemed quite at his ease. "Also," and he nodded at the cudgel, "I 'm quite mortified to have given you alarm."

"You need not disturb yourself about that," said Anthony, grimly. "I 'm accustomed to alarms, and also to what follows after." Then, with the sudden cut to his voice which always told of a rising temper, "What the devil do you mean by easing yourself into my room, like this?"

"Sit down," said the man, unruffled. "And let us talk."

"I warn you," said Anthony sharply, "that that won't do.

I will not sit down, and I will have no talk with you except upon one subject. What are you doing here?"

The man crossed one leg upon the other and examined Anthony in the candlelight.

"I can see," said he, "that they 've spoken the truth. Your temper lifts too quickly for a northern climate. If you 'll be advised, you 'll go quietly back to—is it New Orleans?"

There was something very clear in the voice; it was the crisp utterance of a man who knew his own mind, and had complete confidence in what he said. Anthony, as he looked at him, saw that he had a slim, elegant figure, that his face was of classic regularity; but there was a cold assurance in the eyes and a sneer about the lips.

"Once more," said Anthony, "what are you doing here?" He took a step forward, and his right hand closed about the handle of the stick. "Jocular reflections upon my temper, and impertinent advice, are not answers. Come, now!"

The intruder smiled, easily.

"I suppose," said he, "you are one who prides himself upon sticking to a point. It's a good quality, enough; but one should never permit such a thing to blind one to matters of more interest." He looked at Anthony with the same easy smile, and through it were the sneer and the cold confidence of the eyes. "This port is no place for you," he said. "Be advised. There is a ship sailing to-morrow for Havana; from there to New Orleans is no distance at all."

Anthony waited for no more. Like a wolf he was upon the other and had hauled him to his feet; then the iron-shod stick lashed out, showering blows upon the man's head and shoulders. Overwhelmed by the suddenness of the attack, the intruder fell back against the wall; Anthony threw open the door, seized him by the scruff of the neck, much as one might an offending cur, and, without a word, pitched him into the

hall, and his hat after him and slammed the door. Then he stood his weapon in a corner, put out the candle, got back into bed and fell instantly asleep.

Quite early in the morning he arose; he descended the stairs briskly, his mind fully made up as to what he should do. He ate his breakfast of hot eggs, and cold sliced ham, and breast of fowl; and he drank his tea. Then he took up the knotted stick and went stumping determinedly through the bar on his way to the street.

“Mr. Stevens!”

It was the landlord who hailed him, a man with a paunch of fine proportions, and the face of a serious cherub. Anthony stopped.

“Last night,” said the host solemnly, “you engaged in an altercation. I do not know the merits of the case, sir, but Mr. Tarrant will, I think, send some one during the day to meet you.”

“Is Mr. Tarrant the gentleman whom I was compelled to pitch out of my room?”

“He claims that you mishandled him; but just how or why he did not say. Should he,” and the landlord’s cherubic countenance was filled with interest, “send a friend to converse with you, and you should chance to be out, what report am I to give of you?”

“None,” said Anthony curtly. “I am not at the beck and call of Mr. Tarrant, or any of his friends.”

“He has a rare eye at forty paces,” said the host, with a nod. “A very rare eye. They say there was no better shot in the navy than he, at that distance.”

But Anthony did not pause to make reply; out he went and down Chestnut Street at a clipping pace. There was to be no more vague talk; he’d had enough of that the day before; there were to be no more hintings, no more warnings without

body enough behind them for a man to grasp. He would have plain speech, now; and short speech, or he 'd know the reason why!

The hour was rather earlier than the hour he had started out on the morning before. There was no such hurrying of drays and porters as then; Water Street was stirring slightly, but the river front was still sluggish with sleep, and the deep sea ships in the docks and the stream were as silent as though deserted. He had no idea that Magruder would be in his place of business at this hour, but impatience would not permit him to wait; if he found the place closed, he could tramp about the docks, and return at an hour that promised better.

The shutters were still up at the windows that faced the wharves, and the heavy door was fast. Anthony, however, recalled that the trader had his counting-room at the back, with its windows opening upon an alley; and he made his way around the building on the chance that it was by a door on this side that Magruder usually entered. Here, too, the shutters were up; there was the door, as he expected, and it was standing slightly ajar.

Evidently Magruder, or a clerk, had just arrived, and had not yet time to let daylight into the place. Anthony shoved the door farther open and went in. He found himself in a sort of anteroom, cluttered with nail kegs, bits of plank and cordage, and all the rubbish and refuse of shipping; there was a dark passage that he felt led to the wareroom through which he had passed on the previous day; almost at his hand was a door leading into the counting-room. He lifted the latch of this, and it opened readily; the place was dark save for here and there a gray dart of day that came in at the chinks in the shutters.

"Hello!" Anthony spoke loudly, so that his voice might

also carry down through the passage into the other parts of the building. "Magruder! Are you here?"

But there was no reply. He then rapped with his stick upon the floor, but no one came in answer. Making his way through the passage, he came to the wareroom, dark, heavy smelling, and with rats scuttling about; again he called, but still received no reply. Back at the counting-room door, he looked in; by this time his eyes had grown more used to the dimness, and he began to make things out. There was the cupboard bulging with papers; there was the high desk where Magruder had stood when he first saw him. There must be a pewter candle-stick upon one end of this; Anthony had noted it the day before because the candle end had guttered so, and trailing down the metal holder was the "ghost's shrowd" held by believers in omens to be a sign of peculiar portent.

Anthony felt for this and found it; with his fusee he struck a light, and in a moment had the candle stump burning with a long flame. His shadow danced hugely upon the wall as he turned to look about; and it was then that he saw Magruder, sitting in a chair, hunched in a horridly crooked way, his mouth open in a frozen cry, great clots of blood darkening his neck-cloth, and dead!

VI

DEATH by violence was no new thing to Anthony Stevens; no man could sail the seas he 'd sailed, or penetrate the regions he had gone through, and not have seen sudden and bloody ends a-plenty. But there was an unexpected terror in this one; death had flipped its hand here with a grotesquery that was horrible, and the young man felt himself grow sick.

His eyes went about the counting-room: there was none of the litter that shows a place hastily ransacked; the drawers of the desk were closed; the cupboard was as it had been the day before; a strong box set against the wall was securely locked and unmolested. The thing had not been done for robbery, then. Revenge, perhaps? A man who dealt as closely as Magruder would be likely to anger many; no niggard, in Anthony's experience, had ever gone scot-free. Your clutching, greedy trader always, at some place or other, over-stepped the line, and was it to be wondered at if—

But Anthony, with a sharp gesture and a tightening of the mouth, put this whole train of thought from him. It was like the drugs some shipmen brought with them from the East; it lulled and gave false ease. In this very room, the previous morning, Magruder had said:

“Outside there, in the docks, there are a score or more of fine, deep-water ships; on the wharves and in the warehouses there is much rich stuff. But if they, to the last block and spar, to the last bale and barrel, were offered me as the price of making it known that I 'd brought you north, as I have, I 'd refuse.”

Anthony shivered a little. The place seemed cold; his

flesh was damp; his huge shadow, cast upon the wall by the flare of the candle, seemed bent with the same fear that had filled the man now dead. As he stood there Anthony tried to sense the shape of this dread; and each time a sort of blankness came upon him. The house of Rufus Stevens' Sons, as his mind drew it toward him, was plain, solid, normal; he could not imagine fear trailing through its doors. But there could be no doubt about Magruder; he had sensed the thing, and because he had spoken of it he had paid with his life.

As Anthony looked at the dead man, his breath caught sharply, and he frowned down at him. Then, taking the candle, he held it closer; the blood upon the neck-cloth was hard and dark, not fluid and red as it would have been had the crime been newly done. He touched the body; it was rigid.

The young man put down the candle. The crime, then, was not of that morning. It was some hours old. It had been done during the night. Because of some urgency of business, probably the arrival of his brig *Bristol Pride*, Magruder had remained in his counting-room until late, with his bills of lading, and what not; and death had walked in on him out of the night.

Walked in on him! What had occurred to himself in the night came back to Anthony; and his mind tightened about it. Again he saw the two men in the moonlight; again he saw the one point to his window, and directly afterward come tramping into his room with his orders to leave the city. And the other! He had gone toward the river; he had gone in the direction of this very place!

Facing a tangible possibility, Anthony no longer felt that the room was cold; his skin grew normal; his pulse beat calmly; the shadow on the wall no longer had the cringe of infectious fear.

There came a sound from the depths of the building. Once more Anthony went into the passage and along its length; at the far end of the wareroom a door stood open; a porter was taking down the shutters. Anthony was about to call to him; but his lips closed upon the sound, and he turned and made his way quietly to the door by which he had come in. He looked out; he saw no one in the alley; and in a moment he was walking away, with all the unconcern he could call into his manner.

In trudging from the Half Moon to Magruder's, Anthony had worked himself up to a high pitch of exasperation; more than once he made the stout stick whistle as he slashed it through the air. He had formulated certain questions that must be answered. To the devil with all this tongue-wagging, and nothing coming of it.

But now he knew all he desired; and he had not asked a question. Also he knew what he had to face. It was men! And it was blows! Good! They were things he understood. When he came face to face with the men he'd know what to say; and when the time came for the blows—Anthony smiled here—rather grimly, to be sure; but it was the first smile of the morning.

At Water Street and Mulberry, Christopher Dent's apothecary shop was open, and Anthony went in. The little man was eating broiled fish in his laboratory and had a big book in the Latin tongue propped up before him. He shoved his spectacles up on his forehead and greeted his visitor.

"Sit down," said he. "And take some of the halibut. I'll get you a plate. It came fresh into the market this morning."

He began bustling about; but Anthony stopped him.

"I've had breakfast," said the young man. "An hour ago."

Christopher settled into his place at the table once more.

"You are an early riser," said he. "But, then, you always were. Many and many a time we'd cross the river before sun-up in the spring, when the dandelions were beginning."

Many of the tricks of boyhood persist in later life; and one of Anthony's had been, when he was perplexed, to go to Christopher Dent. The little apothecary had earned a great name among the youth of the old city district by his wisdom as to stone-bruises and warts, stubbed toes and lacerated shins; and because of this it was taken for granted that he also spoke with authority on other things. And now the old instinct became active in Anthony, and he told the apothecary of how he found Magruder. Christopher shoved his spectacles still farther up on his head, closed the book, and forgot about the fish.

"Dead!" said he.

"As a stone," said Anthony.

"And no one was about—the shutters were up, and the door was standing open?"

"Yes."

The little old apothecary stared with round eyes.

"I knew Mr. Magruder," said he. "At odd times he'd come here for a pennyworth of dragon-root, which he used for an asthma. A close man; he spent little and said less. He so seldom mixed with people that I'd have ventured he'd not a friend, nor an enemy, anywhere. What manner of blow killed him?"

"I did not look narrowly," said the young man, "but it seemed in the nature of a stab."

"There are some desperate rogues going about," said Christopher, shaking his head. "Desperate, and cunning, too. Did you speak with the watch after you gave the alarm?"

"I gave no alarm," said Anthony. Then he told of how Magruder had written him at New Orleans, of his interview

with him on the day before, of his talk with Dr. King, and of his visitor at the Half Moon in the small hours of the morning.

"God bless us!" said Christopher Dent, his eyes wider than before. "What can it all mean?"

"I thought," said Anthony, "it would be best to come away quietly from Magruder's and say nothing. As it is, the porters or clerks will find the body in good time; then my name will be in no way connected with the matter, and that, I think, will be of service to me."

The little apothecary considered a moment, and then gravely nodded.

"Yes," said he, "you are right. You are quite right. The city will be in a state over this; the officers will be much exercised. If you'd made the thing known, they'd have asked questions of you. To keep yourself from any touch with this villainy you would have given guarded answers. The officers are not without perception; they would have noted your hesitancy and would, like as not, have insisted upon a clearer statement. And that," with a look of great knowingness, "you'd probably not be inclined to give just now. Yes, you are quite right to say nothing; the body will be found in due course, as you say, and so no harm will be done."

A man came into the outer shop, and the apothecary went out to him.

"I want," said the man, in a voice that Anthony seemed to recognize, "a few pennyworth of Spanish flies, and pitch enough to make a plaster of some size."

"For man or beast," asked Christopher dubiously.

"For a horse—a gelding with a hurt shoulder."

"I would not advise the pitch," said the apothecary; "when cold, it grows hard, and will dull the virtue of even cantharides."

"But it will stick," maintained the other, "and no kicking

or rubbing will get it off. And this horse is the very devil for kicking and stumbling and knocking against things."

"A small quantity of Venice turpentine," said Christopher, "and a little yellow wax—"

"I will have pitch," interrupted the man. "You may be able to doctor humans, Mr. Dent, but you don't understand horses. They need strong medicines and strong words, else they'll get entirely out of hand. There'd have been no accident last night if I'd been able to speak properly to the beast; but having a lady passenger I had to mind my tongue."

Anthony changed his position so that he could see the man. Yes, it was the coachman with whom he had talked at the Half Moon; and the young man went hastily into the shop. The man gave him a nod of recognition and a thick-shouldered salute.

"An accident, did you say?" questioned Anthony. "It was n't serious, I hope."

"Only for the horse," said the man. "He's young and not much used to being driven at night; and the way along the river as you turn the end of the fish-market is not very light. 'T was there he stumbled, and I could go no further."

Anthony cocked a questioning eye at the man.

"The way along the river?" said he. "And turning the end of the fish-market? What were you doing there?"

"It came of my passengers changing their minds," said the man. "We were in Chestnut Street near to Fourth when they suddenly bethought them that they'd do well to drop in on some one else before going home. Down among the wharves is no usual place to go visiting of a night; but, as that was their orders, there I went—or as far as I could; for after the horse fell they got out and I saw no more of them, for I was well occupied in getting back to the stable with a crippled beast on my hands." Here he turned to the apothecary and added confidently: "Yes, let it be pitch. I know

that to work well. Don't be afraid that I 'll mix the fly into it; I 'm too old a horse-leech for that. Get your pitch just hot enough to run, do you see? Spread it upon a common cloth, sprinkle the blister upon the face of it, and clap it on the shoulder. Let him clump about as he will, there it is fixed; and in a day it will have drawn all the humors of the fall away."

"He will have fever from the shock," said Christopher. "His pulse will be heavy and his tongue rough. In that event I would advise pond-dogwood. A plain infusion of the bark makes a draft, bitter, but agreeable and efficacious."

What the man with the injured horse said in way of reply, Anthony did not hear; for his attention was being given to little groups of people who were hastily gathering and dissolving, gathering and dissolving, on the street; other people were hurrying along talking excitedly with each other. Christopher Dent, following Anthony's gaze, also saw them; he opened the door and spoke to a victualer who was passing, wiping his hands on his apron.

"What is it? What has happened?"

"They say a man has been killed," said the victualer. "Some merchant or other; killed in his own counting-room, below here on the river front, near to the fish-market—some time during the night."

VII

IT was a day or two later, and Anthony went to the counting-house of Rufus Stevens' Sons and again inquired for his uncle. The same affable man who had spoken with him on his previous visit came forward, and once more regretted Mr. Stevens's absence.

"But," said he, "he is on his way. The vessel he named to sail in should be in the bay by this time, as the weather has been good, and she is a good sailer. Is there anything we can serve you in?"

"Nothing, thank you." Anthony was turning away.

"What name shall I say?" asked the affable man.

"Stevens."

The affable manner was instantly reinforced by one of much respect.

"It may be that you are related to Mr. Charles," ventured the man.

"His nephew," said Anthony.

The man at once produced a chair.

"I shall call Mr. Whitaker," he said.

Anthony would have asked him not to do so; but just then he caught sight of a woman's figure in another room, the door of which was open, and before he had taken his gaze away Whitaker came up.

"This is a pleasure," said Whitaker, shaking his hand. "Mr. Stevens has not returned, but we're glad to see you, anyhow."

"I'm told he's expected back shortly."

"Yes, but then you never can tell what the wind will do off the capes. Devil of an excitement going on in the city, is n't

there? what with this fellow up the street being taken off as he was, and all that. I don't think I've seen anything but gossiping knots of people, coroners' juries, and city officials for the past two days."

Anthony nodded toward the open door.

"I thought," said he, "I recognized some one inside there."

"Oh, Mr. Weir?"

"No, the lady. Isn't it Mademoiselle Lafargue, daughter of your Monsieur Lafargue, of Brest?"

"Daughter of Lafargue!" Whitaker glanced, surprised, into the adjoining room. "Is that who it is?" He pulled at his neck-cloth to give it a better set and asked with interest: "How long have you known her?"

"Why, I can't say that I know her at all," said Anthony. "It just chanced a few days ago that I exchanged some words with her father."

"So he has a daughter," mused Whitaker in an injured tone. "And he never so much as mentioned the fact while I was at Brest; and I was there upwards of a month! I'd never have taken him for that kind. He seemed much more of the gentleman." As Anthony made no reply to this, Whitaker went on. "On the whole, I don't know what to make of Lafargue. He seems peculiar. Yesterday I happened to mention to Captain Weir—that's him talking to mademoiselle—that I'd seen Lafargue at the coffee-house, and I really think he did n't like it. I believe, in my soul," said Whitaker, "old Lafargue is here unexpectedly; and what he means by it I can't say."

The girl, as Anthony watched her, was standing with one hand resting upon the back of a chair; her head was held well up, and she was talking spiritedly.

"Who is Mr. Weir?" said Anthony, his gaze going toward the man to whom she was speaking.

He was above the average size, of angular, powerful frame,

and his hair was sprinkled with gray. His face was well looking, but singularly mask-like; his eyes were deep-set and steady; they had the quality of cold, green stone. But it was his movements that attracted Anthony's attention. While the girl talked he paced backward and forward; each move had a peculiar deftness; each foot was put down much as a hand might be—a combination of sureness and power which reminded Anthony of some of the huge cat-like beasts of the wilderness. There was a fine dignity about Mr. Weir; his air was one of authority; across his left jaw was a red seam.

“Have you never heard of him?” asked Whitaker. “He's been with the house since your grandfather's day; and, between ourselves, I don't see how your uncle could do without him. A fine, upstanding man, very fair, and with a great mind for detail. It's strange you have n't heard of him. It was Mr. Weir who commanded your grandfather's ship *Argus*, when she outran and outfought two English corvettes and a sloop of war. His name is written into the histories. A very capable person; it's a pleasure to work under him.”

Just then the girl turned and came, agitated, toward the door of the room. There she paused.

“I shall repeat your words to my father,” she said. “He is old and not in good health, and what you have said will be a shock to him.”

“He is a man, and will understand the advisability of what I say,” said Mr. Weir, his eyes cold, green, and unemotional. “Assure him of my consideration, and say that I hope to see him soon.”

Without a word the girl came out into the counting-room. As she passed Anthony on her way to the street, her head was bent, her eyes upon the floor; for an instant the young man fancied that she raised them ever so little and saw him. He took off his hat, but she never paused. Mr. Weir opened the

street door for her; Anthony heard her low voiced "Good-by," and she was gone.

"Mr. Weir," said Whitaker, "may I present Mr. Anthony Stevens?"

The cold, steady eyes of the man seemed to take in Anthony at a single glance; and he held out his hand.

"I had heard you were in the city," said he. "Dr. King mentioned it. In the absence of your uncle, permit me to welcome you."

Later Whitaker was called away, and Weir said:

"After your father's death I had all but forgotten that he had a son; then one day I received a report from our correspondent at New Orleans that brought you back to me in a way that insured your not slipping me in the future."

"What was that?" asked Anthony.

"It was an account of your affair with Alvaro," said Weir, and again his steady eyes took in the young man from head to foot.

Anthony smiled.

"There was a great deal of talk about that at the time," said he, "but it was, after all, a matter of no large consequence. Montufars had suffered greatly from the toll-takers who occupy the reefs and islands below New Orleans, and was hard put to it at the time to meet his business obligations. He feared to let a vessel go out, knowing the pirates would loot it; and in the end his spirit broke completely. I saw that something must be quickly done if he was to be rescued from his embarrassments, and the quickest method was to visit Alvaro.

"I found the old thief snug in his den, overlooking the principal street of New Orleans. There was not a merchant trading in the port who did not know this man was the agent of the pirates, that it was he who bribed the authorities to keep their hands off, and that every seafaring enter-

prise had to pay for his protection. Why men will permit such bloated old spiders to get the upper hand of them," said Anthony, "I cannot understand."

"What did you do?" asked Mr. Weir.

"I laid a loaded pistol on the table before him. I told him that two ships of Montufars were due within a week's time, and that one was to sail, outward bound, directly. And, further, I said, if any harm came to any one of them, be it ever so little, I would shoot him dead."

"And what followed?"

"All three were allowed to pass about their business, unmolested; and in consequence Alvaro still lives, fat as ever, and taking tribute from those who are afraid of him."

Mr. Weir laughed; and as he did the red seam across his jaw looked deeper and darker; the green, flint-like eyes seemed colder.

"That is a deal like your grandfather would have done it," said he. "But what action did the port officials take? for in preventing the looting of these ships you interfered sadly with one of their most cherished privileges."

Anthony made a wry face.

"They made me feel that," said he. "And, because of their hostility, any vessel I sailed in was marked; finally, it was impossible for me to get one; and so I took to the inland trade, which I have followed ever since."

Weir nodded.

"I've heard of some of your doings; it may be," seeing Anthony's questioning look, "that our agent, noting the interest of the house in the matter you've just described, was at some pains afterwards to keep himself in the way of tidings of you. At any rate, he'd often jot down bits of news concerning your enterprises." He studied Anthony for a few moments, and then asked, "Has your interest in land traffic taken away all your desire for the sea?"

"You are taking it for granted that I had such a desire," smiled Anthony.

"No one with a drop of Rufus Stevens's blood in his body could be without it." They talked about old Rufus for a space, and then Weir asked: "Have you seen your uncle since you left here as a boy?"

"No."

"You 'll like him," said the other. "And I feel sure he 'll like you." And then, after another little period of talk, "Have you ever sailed as master of a ship?"

"No, as mate only."

Mr. Weir nodded.

"Yes," said he, "I think your uncle will be greatly interested in you." And then when Anthony shook hands with him, about to go, he added: "The moment his vessel docks, you shall be notified. Are you lodged at one of the taverns?"

"The Half Moon."

"I shall remember that."

Anthony left the counting-room and started up Water Street. Directly ahead, a carriage was drawn up close to the foot-path, and the traffic of the street was ill-humoredly skirting it. As the young man was on the point of passing, he heard a woman's voice; turning his head he saw Mademoiselle Lafargue leaning from the open window of the vehicle, her eyes wide, her face white.

"Mademoiselle!" said Anthony, shocked.

"I have been awaiting you," she said. He was about to speak, but she gestured him not to do so. "The other day my father and myself gained by your good will. You showed yourself a friend, though a stranger. If you saw us again in need of help, would you come forward, once more, to give it?"

"I would," said Anthony.

"We are in danger," she said. "How great, and how immediate, I do not know, and there is not a soul in the whole world to whom we can appeal but you." She spoke to the coachman and the carriage started. "Thank you," she said to Anthony, gratitude in her frightened eyes. "To-morrow you shall hear from me." With that she was gone; and Anthony, his tall hat in his hand, stood staring after her.

VIII

IT was fairly well into the afternoon; Anthony had shaved, dressed his hair, and attired himself smartly. He sat in the public room of the Half Moon, rather cherishing the hope that Mademoiselle Lafargue might show some early sign of requiring his service. A pursy-looking man in top-boots, and with his pockets stuffed with papers, occupied a bench near to a window, and talked with a gentleman wrapped in a greatcoat and with a rug across his knees.

"The watch," said the pursy man, "is all but useless. They cannot prevent wrong-doing, and when it is done they are unable to bring the malefactors to justice."

The man in the greatcoat drew the rug more closely about his knees and seemed unhappy.

"It is very distressing," said he. "A crime like this, and no one to place it upon. For what are we taxed if it is not for the punishmest of offenders?"

"No goods were taken," said the pursy man. "No harm was done save to Magruder's life. That alone seems to have been the purpose of the criminal. A stab-wound, says the surgeon; a stab-wound in the neck, and struck not so shrewdly! 'T was a clumsy hand that did the deed; but," and here the speaker wagged his head, "an apprentice is as good as a journeyman, so long as the task is accomplished."

"There are city lights," said the man in the greatcoat; "there are safeguards for life and property; the watch is well paid. But the streets are not safe; prowlers can go to and fro as they will; houses, places of business are entered,

blows are struck, lives are taken. Yet the prisons are unoccupied; the gallows are unused."

"I have heard a whisper," said the pursy man, "that some one is suspicioned." He nodded his head, and panted, as though the thing excited him. "It was not the watch who came upon the thing; the watch is too slow-going for that. But, when all was confusion and every one at his wit's end, it bobs up unexpectedly of its own accord."

"Some one suspicioned?" said the man in the greatcoat, hungrily. "Who is it?"

But the other shook his head.

"I don't know," said he. "It was only a whisper I got, and it was not meant for my ears. This Magruder had a ship in that day, and there was much to occupy him at his place of business. He remained after his clerks and porters had gone, so they tell; and, about eight, went to a tavern for a chop and a glass of ale, for he was none of your great eaters, having a slim stomach and a none too liberal hand. The people of the tavern say he left there before nine, and it's thought that he went straightaway back to his counting-room and there remained."

"But the suspicioned person?" said the man in the greatcoat, anxiously, not caring to miss this chance of putting the prisons and gallows to their proper use. "How came it to fall upon him?"

"Some one," said the pursy man, "was seen to leave Magruder's place by the counting-room door, which is in the back. Very quietly is the manner in which the person is said to have left, and at an hour that was unusual."

"There should be no difficulty in apprehending the villain," said the other man. "All the evilly disposed in the city should be taken charge of; and the man could be picked from among them."

But the pursy man seemed to doubt this method.

"That would not suffice," said he, "for we could not be sure the crime was done by one given to public villainy."

"You would not think of suspecting any honest man!" said the other, aghast.

"What would you say if you heard—only in a whisper, however, and the whisper not meant for you—that the criminal was not a man at all, but a woman?"

Anthony felt his blood chill; he waited to hear no more, but arose and went into the passage. Here, just entering, he encountered Whitaker, who was most gracefully attired in cream-colored pantaloons, a blue coat with dull copper buttons, a frilled neck-cloth, and a fawn-hued beaver, the brim of which curled magnificently.

"I thought I 'd chance upon you," said this young gentleman, as he shook Anthony's hand. "I 'm on my way to Mrs. Newell's, here in Fourth Street. Charming woman, and loves music. She usually has some one who can finger a harp, or a pianoforte; there 's a German who plays upon a flute most excellently; and some of her guests always sing. Come along; Mrs. Newell will be delighted."

Just at that moment Anthony had desire for neither music nor light company; he 'd much rather have talked if Whitaker had been a person with whom he could have discussed what was in his mind. But, at the same time, he had no desire to be alone with his thoughts; so, with his arm in that of the fop, he was led away to Fourth Street.

Mrs. Newell's house stood in a little court, just above Chestnut, a brick-paved place, with handsome trees, little spaces about the door-steps for growing plants in summertime, and trellises for rose-vines under each window. Mrs. Newell herself, as Whitaker had said, was charming, a little mouse of a woman with dark eyes and an engaging manner.

"You are just in time to hear Tosini," she told Anthony. "A fine performer. He will play one of his own sonatas."

Mrs. Newell's drawing-room was crowded, and Anthony was presented here and there to little groups of ladies. Tosini was a dark, Latin-looking man with curly black hair, shot with gray; from the box of his violin he drew sounds that melted and thrilled, and left the ladies fluttering with delight.

"Astonishing tone," commented Whitaker, as he patted approvingly with his gloves. "Wonderful vibrations. Sometimes I think strings and wood have magic in them when brought together. Remarkable playing."

A round-faced man then blew a melody of Blanck's out of a German flute, and a young lady with a small, sweet voice sang "Love in a Village," to the tinkling of a harpsichord. Then another young lady with a harp, and an enterprising youth who bore a violoncello, joined forces with the flute and violin and made their way through a quartet of Bach's, to the gratification of every one. This done, there was a great chattering and clamoring and exclaiming. Anthony stood at one side rather disconsolately, Whitaker having deserted him, when he saw Mrs. King smiling at him from across the room. At once he made his way to her side.

"I saw you as you came in," she said, "but you did not permit your look to go anywhere but straight ahead, and so I could n't catch your eye until now. I'm sure you enjoyed the music; you looked as though you did."

"It was a treat to me," he returned. "A Spanish sailor thrumming a guitar in the forecastle, or some indifferent fiddling at a trading-post, has been the only music I've listened to for a long time."

"Your mother was a beautiful musician; too beautiful, I'm afraid, for the city of her day. We rather resented it," with a smile. "Have you made up your mind to remain with us?"

"I have not yet seen my uncle."

"Oh, that wonderful uncle," laughed Mrs. King. "So much depends upon what he does or says. A mere nod of his head will change the plans of hundreds. If he speaks, his intimates seem to expect a magical occurrence. But," and she nodded her assurance, "you 'll like him. Charles has not been spoiled by adulation, for the reason that he has not noticed it. In many things he is still a boy. You are twenty-five, and he is fifty; but you are his elder in temperament."

They talked of New Orleans, of Anthony's experiences, of his mother and father; then they returned to music, and Mrs. King, pleased, commented upon the growing taste in such things.

"It must be the large number of people from continental Europe who have come among us, because of the revolutions and disorders going on there. Some of them are so charming that their accomplishments cannot help being imitated. Yesterday at de Lannoy's—Monsieur de Lannoy was a count in France—I heard a young French girl sing in a way that was extraordinary. And she was quite free and self-possessed; not at all like our girls who take a feeling of something like guilt into everything that is not usual. She is here with her father; they are strangers in the city. Monsieur de Lannoy had known her father in a business way at Brest."

"At Brest!" said Anthony. "What was her name?"

"Lafargue. A very beautiful creature, and, it seemed, in the short time I talked with her, with a mind as wonderful as her voice. But in spite of all the sparkle in her manner I could see she felt but little of it. At times her eyes actually seemed to have a look of fear in them. So many of the *émigrés* have that look. Their experiences must have been dreadful."

"No doubt."

"She said she was a stranger," said Mrs. King, "and had been here less than a week. And yet," amusedly, "at five o'clock young Tarrant called for her. A handsome girl can't be a stranger for long anywhere."

Anthony felt a flush of resentment rise to his face; he fumbled with the fringe upon the arm of the chair in which he sat and glowered at the floor.

"It had been arranged that he should call for her," added Mrs. King. "She, being so newly arrived, was not sure that she'd find her way back to her lodging-place."

"I have met with this Tarrant," said Anthony. "But our dealings were brief. What manner of man is he?"

"He is very well known," said Mrs. King. "And inclined, I think, to play the part of a ruffling blade, such as is common in London. He was once in the navy, a lieutenant, and also in the merchant service."

Just then Whitaker came up; with him was a lady who laughed and talked incessantly.

"We were just speaking of Mr. Tarrant," said Mrs. King. "Perhaps you can tell Anthony more about him than I."

"About Bob?" said Whitaker importantly. "Quite right. I know him like a book. Astonishingly clever fellow. Great ability. And has a real talent for clothes. No better dressed man in the city. Takes his hints from Europe. They say he has correspondents who keep him posted."

The lady who held Whitaker's arm here began to laugh once more.

"Oh," she said, "you are overlooking the most interesting thing about him. Please do tell that."

"Do you mean the altercation?" asked Whitaker.

"To be sure," laughed the lady. "It's so amusing. To think of such a thing happening to Bob Tarrant!"

"It seems," said Whitaker, whose manner showed that he scarcely approved of his companion's mirth, "that Tarrant

had an encounter a few evenings ago in which he was taken rather by surprise. The story goes that he was engaged in carrying out a matter of some importance when a certain individual—the name has not yet come out—ran counter to him. They tell me that Bob remonstrated with him, but to no purpose. And then, before he quite realized the turn the affair had taken, the person struck him."

"Oh, Dick!" pleaded the laughing lady, now laughing more than ever. "Do tell it all! Bob was thrashed," she informed Mrs. King and Anthony. "Soundly thrashed, with his hat all broken and red welts across his face. Thoroughly discomfited, they tell me, and raving with rage. *What will he do now?*" laughed the lady. "He has been so looked up to by all our youths!" with an arch glance at Whitaker. "So patterned after in all the things that make a man of fashion and spirit! How in the world can he redeem himself?"

"Well," said Whitaker, "I suppose it *is* amusing, if one is inclined to take that view of it. The impulse is to laugh at any awkward thing that happens to one who has carried himself as high as Tarrant. But, at the same time," with a shake of the head, "it may be no laughing matter in the end, for Tarrant, I hear, has spent the last two days at a quiet place up the river with a pair of pistols, improving his eye."

The jolly lady ceased laughing; Mrs. King looked grave.

"Oh, no!" said she.

"I'm afraid it's true," said Whitaker. "He's of that fashion and has winged his man a dozen times or more."

"But the law," said Mrs. King.

"Of course," said the dandy. "There is one. But who would dare appeal to it?"

When they had taken their leave of Mrs. Newell a little later, Whitaker hooked his arm into Anthony's as they turned out of the little court.

"Tarrant will have this fellow's blood," said he. "It will be the regulation number of paces, a quick exchange, and then God send the poor devil a good surgeon!"

Anthony said nothing, and so Whitaker's mind turned to a matter of more immediate moment.

"I 'm supping at the Crooked Billet to-night," said he. "If you have nothing urgent to occupy you, suppose you join me. It 's an excellent place. Their venison pie is famous."

Anthony gave cordial agreement to this, and the two, still arm in arm, strolled toward the river.

IX

THE Crooked Billet stood facing the water, midway between High and Chestnut Streets. Swift packets huddled before it; their masts towered overhead, all stepped with a rake; all the cordage had the taut trimness of government craft.

The tavern was built high from the ground to keep it out of the wash of the tide, which sometimes overflowed the docks; it had a broad comfortable look, and a promise of cheer within. The principal room was set with oaken tables; the floor planks were scrubbed to a degree of whiteness, and overhead the beams were brown with smoke. Outside, after sundown, the air had an eager nip, for it was now well into the time of year; and the open fire and whale-oil lamps of the tavern had a cherry glow. Little groups were already gathered at the tables; waiters were going backward and forward bearing hot, hearty dishes and tumblers of steaming drink.

With the assurance of an old hand, Whitaker selected a table; and an attentive waiter made them comfortable.

“First,” said Whitaker, “let us have a trifle of French brandy to put ourselves in humor.” Anthony made no objection to this, and the waiter departed to bring the drink. “Old Ned Stapleton, who once was a sort of lord of all the inns in the city and had a master knowledge of cookery, used to say that between meals there was formed a secretion that was a most active poison, and needed to be cut away by ardent spirits before more food was tasted. It is so possible

a thing," nodded the dandy, "and the prevention so pleasant a one, that I 've always given heed to it."

They drank the brandy, and then Whitaker gave his attention to the ordering of the supper.

"A venison pasty," directed he, "and one of comfortable size and that has stood long enough to make it desirable. Also we 'll have some parsnips, roasted potatoes, and greens. Fish?" and he looked at Anthony. "Suppose it is a boiled rock, with eggs shredded upon it?" Anthony nodded, and so rock it was. "And ale," said Whitaker, as the waiter was departing once more; "a tankard each."

Shipmasters and mates, merchants and upper clerks, ate of the good food, drank the excellent liquor of the Crooked Billet, and enjoyed the warm fire and the lights.

"A settled, respectable gathering," said Anthony, with a smile, as his eye went about. "And all out of much the same mold. In New Orleans, now, one would see many breeds and kinds; and not only would honest traffic be talked of, about the tables, but many kinds of devilment as well."

Whitaker wagged a wise head.

"Don't be misled by appearance," said he. "In my travels I 've learned that roguery is roguery the world over; it has its place in every port, and all manner of men are engaged in it. If your evil-doer has the air of a church-going man, is he any the less a rascal?"

Anthony shook his head.

"I 've found," said Whitaker, growing even more impressive, "that people take on the manner of those about them—in a general way. Now, for example, look at those two gentlemen warming their legs at the fire, and so enjoying the flavor of their drink. A comfortable man of business, and a middle-aged clerk who has possibly been with him for years? No such thing. That old codger is one of the biggest rascals that ever shaved a note, and the other has ar-

ranged more stinking villainy than any dozen others in the port."

"It is possible," said Anthony, not at all amazed; "the greatest rogue I ever encountered was at Batavia, and he looked like a comfortable man of family."

"Not more than a good step from here," proceeded Whitaker, "there is a section known to shipping men as the Algerian Coast—and rightly, too, for those who have their trade there are pirates to a man."

"I have always fancied that business was conducted rather primly in this city," said Anthony, "and that your authorities looked after shipping malpractice with a keener eye than is done in warmer waters."

"No eye can catch these gentlemen," stated Whitaker; "for their doings are underground; or, if not that, then bent in some cunning way to the shape of the law. Their whole procedure is rich in rascality; many a ship has gone down, and many a business house, also, to their gain."

The boiled rock arrived, smoking hot, upon a large dish and garnished with egg as desired. Afterward the venison pasty, and a notable dish it looked, was placed before them, with stewed whole parsnips and some tender young cabbages.

"Ned Stapleton was fat," said Whitaker, as he set his ale tankard down, "and if it were not for that I'd agree that his idea of life was the pleasantest and most profitable for a gentleman. What can be more agreeable than snacks of good cookery amid pleasant surroundings, and with well-conditioned liquor to keep it company?"

"It has its virtues," admitted Anthony, filling his plate with the savory contents of the pasty. "I'll never doubt that."

"But to be fat!" exclaimed Whitaker. "That is not a state of body for a person of taste. God save the man that

the smallest tailor can't reach around with his tape. He is lost!"

They were engaged interestedly with the food when the door opened and admitted Dr. King and Captain Weir.

"Well," said the physician, as he shook Anthony's hand. "I see that it has not taken you a great while to hear of our advantages. Captain Weir you know, I think."

Anthony once more shook hands with Weir; and as he looked into his face he again noted the level, steady eyes, the fixed expression, and the scar across the jaw. Whitaker had also arisen to greet the new-comers; and a few moments later, while he was engaged in some talk with the captain, Dr. King said in a low tone to Anthony:

"Weir is a man well worth cultivating; he has the strongest hand in all your uncle's affairs. He is firm, sane, reserved, unemotional, never in haste; and little escapes him."

"Different sorts of men," said Whitaker, after the two had left them and taken a table at the other end of the room. "Totally different, but, I should say, equally dependable. Fine quality, both of them. But Weir is none of your easy-mannered ones, like the doctor; courtly conduct is n't taught on the decks of Yankee ships."

"They are close friends, though, I suppose?" said Anthony.

"No," replied Whitaker; "no. I think they admire each other in a practical way; but they are not at all intimate. Their being together to-night is, I think, because of you. Dr. King, I think, desires a place made for you in the counting-house."

"I see," said Anthony.

Active inroads had been made in the pasty; the tankards had run low and been refilled when Anthony, chancing to look up, saw Mademoiselle Lafargue and her father moving

among the tables toward him. At once he pushed back his chair and arose. His eyes met hers, but she averted her face and passed him by without a word or sign. A waiter opened a door for them, which apparently led into a smaller room; and then it closed, leaving Anthony standing, stunned.

"That was unkind!" exclaimed Whitaker. "Most devilishly unkind. She has n't the excuse that she did n't see you; she looked full at you."

Anthony sat down, a frown upon his face.

"I had n't expected that," said he. "But, then," with a laugh, "under the circumstances, what reason had I to expect anything."

Whitaker discoursed philosophically upon the ways of women—upon the vagaries of young ones in particular. Anthony endured it silently; then, so it happened, the door through which the girl and her father had passed was opened once more, this time widely. Anthony saw a group of people—men and women; there was a table loaded with food and drink, and Mademoiselle Lafargue was talking earnestly with a handsome young man whose dress showed him to be a person of fashion.

"Well, dash me!" exclaimed Whitaker. "There's Bob Tarrant!"

The girl's attitude seemed one of pleading; she was asking something of Tarrant, and he seemed reassuring her with courtly grace. And, as Anthony watched, the man turned to another, him who stood holding the door open, and nodded. The man at the door laughed; Anthony shot him a look, and recognized the big young man who had thrown the saddle-bags from the deck of the New York packet. Then the door slammed shut, and the young man, a quizzical look upon his face, strode through the public room.

He stopped at the table at which sat Anthony with Whitaker.

“Good evening,” said he to Anthony, his even teeth gleaming good-naturedly. “Well met, sir. I’d thought to see you again, but I did not expect it to be under conditions like these.”

Anthony looked at him quietly, while Whitaker was plainly astonished; all who sat in hearing distance were slued about in their chairs, their food neglected while they listened.

“Well?” said Anthony.

“Time alters things sadly,” said the big young man, “and apparently it requires no great space to do it, either. Only the other day I would have said you were creditably placed in a certain young lady’s favor; and I’d had good reason, for you took up that little matter of my making with promptness, and stood to it nobly.” He dragged a chair to the table and sat down. “But to-day,” he said, “I see you displaced. She has turned her back upon you; and not only that, but she has taken into her confidence one who sends me with a rather grave message.”

“To what effect?” scowled Anthony.

“Mr. Tarrant is of the opinion, since you saw fit to lift your hand to him the other night, that some redress is due him. He has desired me to speak to you, or to any friend whom you might name, and learn if you are of a mind to give him satisfaction.”

The words were fairly low; but there was a sudden stir and whispering in the room. Whitaker, astonished, looked at Anthony.

“Is it possible,” said he, “that it was you who struck Tarrant?”

“It was,” replied Anthony. “And now, as a personal friend of Tarrant’s, it would perhaps be best if you withdrew; I have no desire to involve you.”

But Whitaker spoke promptly.

“I have always been upon good terms with Tarrant,” said

he; "but still it does not follow that I should abandon another friend because of that."

"Well spoken," applauded the big young man. "Crisp, and to the point. Here is a gentleman of much the same kidney as yourself," to Anthony. "Impulsive; ready to take up a cause at a moment's notice." He laughed and seemed immensely entertained. "Never an inquiry; never a thought that the matter might be otherwise than stated."

"Suppose," said Anthony quietly, "we indulge in as few observations as possible."

"Excellent!" approved the other good-humoredly. "Just what I should have expected of you." He composed himself to a smiling gravity and resumed. "Well, then, as Tarrant has received a blow from you, I, as a friend, have come to ask that you refer me to some one with whom I can make arrangements for a meeting."

"You are carrying out a code I am not too familiar with," said Anthony. "But I think your coming on this business into a public place and bawling it out so that every one must hear is contrary to the accepted practice."

The other glowed with appreciation and made a wide gesture.

"If I had known—" he began; but Anthony interrupted him.

"You know now, at any rate," said he.

"Having offended, I shall carry out the remainder of the affair with all possible decorum," mocked the big young man.

"You may carry it out in any way you choose," said Anthony, "for, as far as I am concerned, your part will consist only in taking back word to Mr. Tarrant that I decline a meeting of any sort."

Whitaker was a little pale; but he sat still. Again there was a stir among the surrounding tables, followed by a deep silence.

"Then," said Tarrant's representative, "you refuse?"

"I do," said Anthony.

"Do you give any reasons?"

"None."

The big young man arose.

"You are aware," said he, "that you will be posted?"

"In any action that is taken against me," said Anthony, "I shall know how to defend myself."

"In all likelihood, the first time Tarrant meets you in a public place he 'll brand you a coward."

Anthony looked up at the speaker, and replied quietly:

"If he does, I 'll beat him like a dog."

The other stood for a moment, as though waiting for something more; but, as Anthony was silent, he turned, and in a moment the door which had admitted him to the public room closed behind him. Whitaker spoke in a low voice.

"Of course I do not know what is usual in New Orleans. But it must be the same as anywhere else. Tarrant is held a man of consequence here, and to refuse him satisfaction would be a grave thing socially. Is your mind completely made up?"

"Dueling," spoke Anthony, "is a code that has no place in the modern world; it is murderous and preposterous."

Whitaker shook his head.

"There is a law against it, but the man who refuses a challenge is marked."

Anthony looked more grim than ever.

"I am never troubled," said he, "by the way people regard me. And fear of society's disapproval is only entertained by those who value its countenance. There is no force that I know of that can make me place my life in jeopardy at the hands of a practised man-killer; neither can it compel me to go out in cold blood and kill him."

Whitaker wriggled in his seat.

"I 'm afraid your uncle—" he began.

"I have not seen my uncle in fifteen years," said Anthony, coldly; "and his opinions in the matter can have no weight with me." Then he leaned across the table, seeing the grave look in the face of Whitaker, and said kindly: "I think my attitude troubles you. Please do not allow any duty which you think due me as a chance acquaintance to entangle you in a disagreeable situation."

Whitaker swallowed hard, but he was firm.

"You see," said he, and his voice was so pitched as to be unheard by the curious ones about him, "my group is the gayer one,—Tarrant and his kind,—and it holds to certain things as necessary in a position of honor! But, damn it all, Stevens! I 'll overboard with the whole lot of it; for, after all, what you say is nearer the truth; only most of us have never had the courage to admit it."

A door was heard to close sharply. Tarrant was in the public room, his eyes going about, his face flushed with passion. At sight of him a murmur arose; then it grew until it was a sort of subdued roar, shot through with startled cries; for the duelist had sighted his man and was advancing swiftly toward him between the rows of tables. Whitaker said to Anthony:

"You had better get up. He means to strike you!"

Anthony made no reply; he sat still and glowered at his plate. A close observer would have noted, though, that his swift, powerful body was adjusted for a sudden leap and a tigerish lashing out. Tarrant reached his side.

"Mr. Stevens," said the man, fury shaking his voice, "I have received your message."

Anthony turned his head and waited.

"Let me say to you," proceeded Tarrant, "that while your attitude may serve in a mongrel community like New Orleans, it will not be tolerated here." Anthony was silent,

but Whitaker saw his rigid jaw, and noted his back hunch as the great muscles grew tight. "For the last time," said Tarrant, "will you—"

"One moment, please," said a hard, quiet voice.

The duelist turned, and saw the mask-like face of Weir, and a pair of eyes that were as cold as ice.

"I would advise, Mr. Tarrant," said Weir, "that you carry this matter no further. When the facts are known, it will be generally seen that you cannot require any action from this gentleman except that which he is giving you."

The eyes of Tarrant seemed to dart flame.

"What! What!" breathed Whitaker in Anthony's ear. "He 'll not dare face Weir! He 'll not dare!"

But before it was made clear what was in Tarrant's mind he was surrounded by a sudden surge of people. There was a hubbub of voices; doors slammed, other people hurried forward; there were oaths and bitter vows, and the pleading of the tavern's people for order. Then Tarrant was led away. Weir bowed to Anthony in return for some word of thanks, and turned back to Dr. King. Whitaker, a little later, with a most leisurely air, settled the bill; then he and Anthony got up, passed through the staring groups about the tables, and left the place.

As the dandy was parting from Anthony at the door of the Half Moon he said:

"Well, I think Weir has ended the matter as far as you are concerned; for, once he's pronounced a judgment on a thing of this kind, no one will think of taking it otherwise. He's an authority. And it will be easier for you, too. As it stood, though I think you were right, you'd have had an extraordinary position to maintain."

"I am much in Mr. Weir's debt," said Anthony.

Whitaker nodded.

"When I heard his voice," he said, "I knew that was the

end of it. No matter what Tarrant's state of mind, he'd never try to face down Weir."

"Why?" asked Anthony.

"Well, any man who knows Weir properly—and Tarrant does, for he once sailed under him—would not care to measure skill with him in a struggle. Tarrant is a swift, courageous blade, and like a whip for giving offense or taking it. But Weir is of another kind. He has something in him," and Whitaker shook his head, "that most rufflers, no matter how desperate, fear."

Not a great while after Anthony and Whitaker had left the Crooked Billet, Monsieur Lafargue and his daughter, in the private supper-room, off at one side, also stood up to go. Tarrant, now recovered from his rage, was beside them; and the big young man smiled good-humoredly in the background.

"I am greatly in your debt, sir," said Monsieur Lafargue, to Tarrant. "You have shown yourself a friend, at a time when a friend was greatly needed."

"Sir," said Tarrant smoothly, "I am glad to have been of service to you, and to mademoiselle. For no gentleman could have witnessed what I have witnessed in your affairs and not come forward. I saw you about to fall in the hands of Anthony Stevens, the most subtle of double-dealers, and of course," with a gesture, "I had to do what I could to prevent it."

"But, sir," and it was the girl who spoke, "are you quite sure of all you say?"

"Mademoiselle," said Tarrant, "what I have stated is a very grave thing; and so, before saying it, I considered it very carefully. As your father will tell you, the house of Rufus Stevens' Sons has long been engaged in commercial practice which cannot be sanctioned by honest men; things have been

done with insurance, and with merchant moneys adventured in their care, which no one of shrewdness can overlook. Is not your father's money in some of the dealings of this house? Has he not persuaded his friends at Brest to venture theirs?"

"That last," said the old Frenchman, "is the worst of it." He shook his head, and his hand gestured helplessly. "If loss comes, I will never forgive myself."

"There was another who had risked his money, one who knew how your father was situated with the firm, one who wrote him a letter," said Tarrant, still addressing the girl. "I refer to Magruder. He saw how matters were going with the house and feared the result. Magruder somehow knew—he was a cunning, ratty kind of a man, who knew many things he was not credited with—that your father had moneys involved, and so wrote him a letter of warning. Is it not so? It was this letter that brought you and your father to this country? Am I right? But for all his writing Magruder was afraid; he 'd not meet your father openly; he dreaded some unseen danger."

"And it seems he was right in that," spoke the big young man, his smile growing broader. "Events, I think, have proved he had reason for his dread."

"Before you could arrange to speak with him," said Tarrant to the old man, "he was done to death." And as Lafargue shuddered, and the girl turned away, Tarrant went on: "Who was interested in having this man die at this particular time? Could you say? Who stood in fear of what Magruder might tell? Whose rascally dealings were about to be exposed? The people most interested in the house of Stevens, as you know very well!"

"I thank you," said Monsieur Lafargue tremblingly. "You have gone to a deal of trouble, sir, for our sakes, and have probably saved me from a great mistake."

"Avoid all conferences with the Stevens firm, or any one bearing the Stevens name," said Tarrant, shaking his hand. "To deal with them in any way will bring you and your daughter, both, misfortune."

"But how is my business here to be carried forward?" asked the old man.

"Take heed! If you went to them now, you could merely state what you suspect," said Tarrant. "You would be placing yourself in their hands, for you have no proof of anything. My advice to you is to wait." He nodded to the old man understandingly. "Of course, an indefinite stay here will be expensive, and your means are limited; I know that. But I have suggested a way of surmounting the difficulty. Money can be had readily; old Bulfinch is your man; you have only to ask him for it."

"You are kind," said Monsieur Lafargue. "I should feel helpless and alone, indeed, without you."

Tarrant went with them to their carriage; and when he had handed them in, and their driver sat with the reins in his hands, he said:

"Remember what I have told you—both to-day and to-night. I repeat it all now. Keep to yourselves. Do not trust the firm of Stevens—especially do not trust young Anthony of that name; he is, as I have shown you, the most ruthless of them all. Have no confidences with any one; be silent, and you will win through."

Then Tarrant went back to the supper-room; the big young man was seated at the table; and across from him was a white-haired old man, with the rosy, gentle face of a saint.

"Good!" said Tarrant, at sight of the old man. "I had hoped you'd not keep us waiting, old moneybags!"

The new-comer laughed; it was a laugh that had a soothing, oily quality; one white hand stroked his well-shaven chin.

"I strive to be prompt," said he. "It 's a virtue that has a deal of value in a business way. And being early to-night repaid me in an unexpected way; for while I waited in the public room I witnessed your encounter with Captain Weir."

Tarrant sat down; with his elbows on the table, his chin in his hands, he cursed in cold anger.

"Some day," he said, "I 'll drive a bullet through that man's skull, so help me God!"

But the saintly old man held up a protesting hand.

"No, no!" said he. "Oh, no! We are friends. We are all friends together. We have business relations with Captain Weir. No violence; no discord. It would be to the disadvantage of us all."

"My thought!" said the big young man. "My thought, exactly, Mr. Bulfinch. Let us put all private matters to one side; for the present, at least, let us work for the common good."

Tarrant regarded them both with cold eyes.

"Is it for the common good that Weir affronts me at almost every turn?" said he. "Am I possessed of more patience than the run of men, that I 'm continually asked to bear his impertinence?"

"Do not forget," said the old man in his soothing voice, "that the plan we are working under is, in a general way, one laid down by him. And he disapproves of the way you have selected in dealing with young Anthony Stevens; he fears it is not a good way."

Tarrant sneered; but it was the big young man who spoke.

"I have no good reason to hold my hand where this same Anthony Stevens is concerned," said he. "But, on the whole, I agree with Weir. Keen young blades like this are not apt to be budged by hostile talk, or the threat of blows. It only makes them all the more resolved."

"It is the captain's desire," said old Bulfinch, "to manage the matter carefully; he plans to be friends with this young man, to encourage him, to support him. And, then, one day will come an occasion when what is necessary can be done with safety. And it *will* be done."

"I have no stomach for craft when a smart blow or two will serve as well," said Tarrant bitterly.

But the big young man wagged his head in disagreement.

"I once thought that, myself," he said, "and risked my bones every day for a little gain. But Weir's way gives fine profits and no risks; we squeeze our toll out of shipmen and need never even take to sea. Instead of facing a roused captain, with a ship's company behind him, on his own deck, we now, thanks to Weir's brains, make a little arrangement with that same captain before he goes on board; and the ship and cargo are ours at whatever place we say, and without striking a blow."

Old Amos Bulfinch smiled; his rosy, saint-like face glowed with mildness.

"Could anything be better put?" he asked of Tarrant. "Would it be possible to state a perfect case in more comprehensive words? Sir," to the big young man, "I thank you."

"But even in the thing you give Weir so much credit for," said Tarrant, "all is not done that could be done. Why are our operations held to a single house? Why should we be forced to be content with Rufus Stevens' Sons alone? There is Girard; there is Crousillat; there is a half-dozen more. Good profit is to be had by extending our operations to all of these—"

But the smooth tones of Amos Bulfinch checked him.

"Rich they are, those merchants," agreed old Amos, "and their ships are many. But each man of them is as keen as a knife-blade; each has a thousand eyes! Where a thing can be done in the shadow of Rufus Stevens' Sons with ease

and comfort, it could only be undertaken, in the case of these others, with much danger; at almost any moment we could expect to be laid by the heels."

"Weir is a dog-fox; I'd follow his plan without question where I'd not even listen to another," said the big young man. "Leave the other houses alone. This one is rich enough, for the time, at least."

Tarrant regarded the younger man, and then the elder one, with a curl at his lip.

"You both have a deal of respect for Weir's opinions in some things," he said. "And yet, strangely enough, you have very little in others. There is no thing which he has spoken more sharply against than the proposed dealing with the French agent, now on his way here, in the matter of letters of marque. And yet *you* strongly favor the project."

"The matter of the letters of marque is to be a venture of our own," said the big young man. "That is, if the captain is disinclined to join us."

Old Bulfinch nodded.

"Quite right," he said. "It is to be an affair of our own. But we shall be prudent, for all that. We shall be exceedingly careful that every legal aspect be observed."

Tarrant laughed.

"A saying like that has an odd sound," said he, "when I remember that Blake here," and he pointed to the big young man, "was brought north to take active charge of the matter—Blake, who for years has given as much thought to the legality of any action as he would to a snap of his fingers."

The big young man smiled; but it was old Amos who spoke.

"Blake," said the old man, "is to take charge when all is said and done; the legal status of French privateers, recruited and armed in our ports, will have been passed upon when he sends out the first of them."

"And when they are passed upon and take to sea," smiled

the big young man, "then will come the time to forget legal forms; rich merchantmen will be our only need, and the seas between here and Rio are crowded with those."

"Well," said Tarrant, "God knows I don't want to put myself in a position to block any such flow of circumstance. If there are prizes to be had, let us have them. If we get Weir's help in the matter, well and good. If we do not, we can, as you suggest, go on without it."

"This Frenchman, Lafargue, was an excellent thought," said old Bulfinch. "Oh, excellent! He can do much for us if properly managed."

"I have found a way for that," said Tarrant. "He is without money; I have recommended that he go to you."

"I am always ready to accommodate gentlemen, upon good security," said the old money-lender smoothly. "A good name or two on the back of a bill will go far with me."

"His bill will have no name upon it," said Tarrant. "And he has no security."

Old Bulfinch looked at the speaker, astonished.

"What?" said he. "What? Oh, surely, now!"

"In the matter of Lafargue," said Tarrant, "names and securities must be forgotten. You must only remember that Lafargue is a man to receive special treatment."

"Very careful, special treatment," agreed the big young man, nodding. "He must be beholden to us, he must be tied to us, tightly, in some way; and, of all ways, to have him owe you money is the readiest and best."

"In the matter of money," said old Bulfinch, wincing, "it is wise to use care. Money is not easily come by; and it should not be too easily parted with."

"Any money spent in the matter of Lafargue will be well spent," said Tarrant. "We must have his friendship; for through him we hope to gain the countenance of this other Frenchman, Genêt."

“And keep well to mind who and what Genêt is; he is the French minister, now on his way here for the sole purpose of arming American ships to sail under the French flag. He was Lafargue’s friend in France,” said the big young man, “and we must see to it that he is our friend here.”

Tumblers of hot drink were brought them, and, with the plates and cups pushed to one side of the table, they talked and drank and planned. The coming of Lafargue to the city, so it seemed, had startled them, at first. Untold harm might have been done by it, had not Charles Stevens’ happened to be away. But now, on the whole, they were pleased with the old Frenchman’s arrival. Monsieur Lafargue had no legal proof of any slack dealing, and so he could not appeal to the law; they had so filled his mind with apprehension that he ’d not dare enter the counting-room of Rufus Stevens’ Sons and frankly tell what he thought of the various transactions that troubled him. Altogether it was agreed, they were safe from him. And his tightened circumstances now delivered him into their hands; being a friend to the French agent, he ’d have much influence. Legalized piracy! By God, it was like a dream of paradise! You sailed the seas with a good ship under you; you took what you liked, and the law supported you! Oh, yes, on the whole they were now pleased with the old Frenchman’s coming. They had hoped in the regular course of things to get commissions for a vessel or two from Genêt; but now, look you, a fleet was not impossible. Give them the harrying of the seas for three months’ time, and you, or any one else, could do what you pleased. They would be satisfied.

“But,” said old Amos Bulfinch, as he was about to go, “I have seen Lafargue’s daughter. She is not one to be easily misled. By some chance she might distrust this matter of ours, and might warn her father away.”

“Never fear for that,” said Tarrant, as he rang the bell

for more drink. "That event has been provided for, and by no less a person than Weir himself. He has suggested a little ruse, to safeguard those things in which he is interested; but it so chances that it safeguards our venture as well. You need fear nothing from the girl; she will have her mind filled with other matters, I promise you that."

"Keep your ears open in the next few days," smiled the big young man. "Common gossip will tell you much."

Old Amos wore the look of a peaceful saint, so calm was he of face, so rosy of color, so white of hair, as he bade them good night; and then he went out, leaving them together at the table awaiting the liquor they had ordered.

X

THE next morning as Anthony ate his breakfast at the inn he noticed many glances cast in his direction; waiters spoke to each other behind their hands, while they watched him out of the tails of their eyes. He smiled, even while he frowned.

He had finished, and was seated, with a journal, at a window in the public room, when he noted a slight man of middle age come in, look about, and ask a question of a porter.

"Mr. Stevens," said the man, in a hushed sort of voice, as he came forward. "I am from the counting-house of Rufus Stevens' Sons, and have been sent to say that Mr. Charles Stevens is now in the city."

Anthony felt a thrill of satisfaction.

"Thank you," he said. And then, "Did Mr. Stevens direct you to bring me word?"

"No," said the man. "Not Mr. Stevens—Captain Weir."

"I see," said Anthony.

There was something fragile about the man; his skin had a transparent quality, his hands were thin and nervous, his whole aspect was worn. As Anthony looked at him, he became aware of something that impressed itself upon him as a glow—a pallid, luminous something—white, like moonlight.

"I will step down to the counting-house during the course of the day," said the young man. "I trust Mr. Stevens is well?"

"Quite well," said the man.

This luminous quality which Anthony felt the man threw off also lit up his eyes. They were deep-set eyes, light in color and full of pain; in them a pale hope seemed constantly lifting itself through shadows, only to sink again.

"Is there anything more?" asked Anthony, as the other lingered.

The man shook his head, but did not move.

"I am Tom Horn," said he. "As a boy, I worked as clerk for your grandfather. And now I am clerk again."

There was an oddity in this simple statement that supplied a missing portion of Anthony's conception of the man. Surely he was not quite firm in his mind.

"In your grandfather's time," said Tom Horn, "the circles flowed freely about the world. They were wide and wonderful, and the sun and the wind and the stars were in them." He bent closer to Anthony: "Do you know what makes the wind to blow?" he asked.

"No," said Anthony.

"No more does any one else," said Tom Horn. "No one in all the world knows what makes the wind to blow. And no one knows why water flows in circles, and rings in every ship, every island, and every man. Once," he said, "I saw a circle around the moon. The world moves in a circle. I do, too. I began as a clerk; and I am a clerk once more."

"You held a better position once, then," said Anthony.

"I was supercargo in the *William and Mary*," said Tom Horn. "Three voyages in all. She was a stout ship, and well officered. But what can wooden planks and good intentions do when once the circle begins to narrow? Nothing. It is like one man setting his strength to prevent the world turning over. All circles move. There is no power under God's that can stop them."

With that he turned and went out; but in a few moments Anthony saw him peering in at one of the windows, and in

his eyes were at once the hope and fear that, perhaps, marked his madness.

It was well toward the middle of the afternoon when Anthony arrived at Rufus Stevens' Sons and was received by the affable clerk.

"Yes, Mr. Stevens is in, sir," said this personage. "I will speak to him."

He hastened through a doorway, and in a moment hastened out again.

"You are to go right in, sir," said he.

Anthony entered. The room that Charles Stevens had fitted up for himself was low-ceilinged like the others; its width and breadth were great; the floor was laid with rugs of marvelous colors and texture, and the walls were hung with rich draperies, pictures, and strange-looking arms. The furniture was all of far-off lands; there were things of ebony, and ivory, of silk and gold, and the breath of the place was vital with rich essences.

Charles sat upon a divan and nursed his lame foot; he was a young-looking man; his color was fresh, and his hair as dark and thick and vital as it had been at twenty-five. He was talking with a settled-looking person who sat at a table with a quill and an ink-pot, scrawling figures upon a sheet of paper.

"I would not lay out another groat," Charles was saying, "upon a ship of the build and stowage-room such as we now have. They are cramped, they are slow, they are tricky. What we want is vessels that will carry both cargo and canvas, and will stand up under a wind that blows above the ordinary."

The settled man looked up from his figures.

"What results I have reached—what results every ship-builder has reached—are reared upon tried and tested things. Little by little we learn how to improve a hull so that it

gives less and less resistance to the water; and carrying-room, Mr. Stevens, is largely dependent upon the shape of this hull. A ship is a ship; it is not a hogshead with masts in it."

Charles Stevens's laugh was singularly young. He got up and limped up and down the floor, both hands waving.

"Siddons," said he, "I have the same struggle with you every time I ask anything that is not customary. It's in the records of the house that my father went through the same thing with your father. But keep this in your mind: it is the necessities of trade that improve ships; if their advance had been left to the builders, we'd still be hugging the coasts in galleys and afraid to venture out of sight of land. The Yankee ships are making ours look like Venetian caracks; they have moved ahead of us, Siddons; they are winging it into Calcutta carrying almost twice our merchandise, and doing it in less time."

The settled man consulted his figures.

"You talk of vessels of seven hundred tons burthen," he said, plaintively. "Who ever heard of such things?"

"In New England," said Charles, "they not only have heard of them but have built them." He held up two fingers of his left hand and pointed to them with the forefinger of his right. "Build me two ships, Siddons,—twins,—of live-oak, clear of all defects, bolted well, with all clamps and spirketings and braces of the best metal, and give me room in their bellies to stow cargoes that'll open the eyes of all Massachusetts."

"But seven hundred tons!" complained Siddon. "Is there water enough in the ocean to keep such a monster afloat?"

"Who said anything of seven hundred tons?" demanded Charles. "It was the Salem ship that measured that. The pair you are to build for me are to be of a thousand tons."

Siddons gasped and curled up in his chair.

"A thousand tons! The seas would break their backs in the first blow."

"Ship-builders have been saying that with each additional inch since the beginning. So don't worry me with it; I want the vessels, and they are to be built on this river. The Siddons yard has always laid down the keels for Rufus Stevens' Sons; so get your computers to work; see that the timbers are properly seasoned, and the ironmongery gotten under way."

"There must be new ways erected; there must be new docks," complained the ship-builder. "The outlay will be frightful."

"But think of the income, Siddons," said Charles. "Think of passing the Delaware Capes, inbound from Calcutta, in seventy days." And as Siddons paused in the act of gathering up his sheets of paper, and gazed at him, his jaw hanging slack, Charles laughed and said, "How old is your son, Siddons?"

"Twenty, passed."

"Get him into the yards as quickly as you can. You need a fresh eye. Before he has reached your limitations, a two months' trip from the same port will be thought a long one." As the ship-builder moved toward the door, Charles added, "When can you give me the figures?"

"In a week," replied the man.

"Excellent! In a week I shall expect them."

A number of times in his limping up and down the floor, Charles had passed within a few feet of Anthony, but he had not paid the slightest attention to him; now, as he closed the door upon Siddons, he turned with a boyish smile and looked at him.

"Anthony!" said he. "Robert's Anthony!" And, as he looked, the smile changed in character; the pleased look in his eyes became one of wonder. "You should have been

called Rufus, for your grandfather," he said. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-five," said Anthony.

"At that age your grandfather was master of a ship voyaging half across the world," said Charles. "God was in the same mood when he fashioned you two." He looked for another space, and then added, "Yes, they should have called you after him."

Emerging from the surprise, he shook Anthony's hand with great warmth.

"I'm greatly pleased," said he, his face a shining proof of it; "I'm amazingly pleased. I had no thought that such a pleasure as this awaited me. So your father and mother are both dead." He nodded at his nephew wistfully. "Both dead and gone. And you left alone, and I never so much as sending you a line of writing."

"These things escape one," said Anthony; "especially when they happen so far away."

"A brother is a brother, no matter what the distance; and you were of my own blood. There was never a time when I did not hold your mother as the most beautiful and best of women; there was no reason why all these years should have gone by, and I holding my tongue; no reason at all."

They sat down.

"Have you been in the city long?" asked Charles.

"Less than a week. I inquired here for you, but learned you were away."

"And you've had a devil of a dull time, I know, going about in strange places."

"Why, fortunately, no. I dropped in on Christopher Dent—"

"What—old Kit!" Charles laughed, and curled himself up in a corner of the divan, nursing his lame foot. "Good soul! I'm glad you thought of him."

“And while I was there who should come in but Dr. King, and he, when he found who I was, instantly invited me to supper.”

“Excellent!” approved Charles. “It could n’t have been better.”

They talked for some time of Dr. King and of the city and its changes; then there came a tap upon the door, and the affable clerk put in his head.

“Mr. Clark, of the *Starry Cross*, sir, when you are at leisure.”

“I ’ll speak to him in a few moments.” Then, as the clerk withdrew, Charles said to Anthony. “The skipper of one of my tea ships. He reached port while I was away.”

“I ’m afraid I ’ve come in on you at a time when your attention is much engaged.” Anthony got up. “Perhaps to-morrow or next day you ’ll not be so pressed.”

“Sup with me to-night,” said Charles, putting his arm about Anthony’s shoulders. “I want you to make the acquaintance of Captain Weir.”

“I ’ve met the captain already,” said the young man.

“You ’ve not wasted your time, at any rate,” smiled his uncle. “But sup with me, anyhow; there ’s thousands of questions I want to ask, and to answer.”

“Thank you,” said Anthony. “I shall be glad to.”

He shook hands with Charles once more and then left the counting-house. At the Half Moon, he encountered the round-faced coachman, seated upon his bench in the passage.

“Good even, sir,” said the man. “I suppose they are well settled by this.” And then, as Anthony looked at him questioningly, he added. “I mean Mr. Lafargue and his daughter—in their new place.”

“New place!” said Anthony. “Have they gone?”

“Why, yes; this morning,” said the coachman. “And all

their luggage with them. But I could n't say where. Seeing as they 're friends of yours, I thought you knew."

"No," said Anthony, "I did n't."

And then he went, in a heavy-footed way, up the stairs to his room.

XI

THE house of Charles Stevens stood in Ninth Street, close to Chestnut. The building was set back from the street and in the midst of a garden which even now, in the bareness of the autumn, looked pleasant with its tall trees, its neat walks, its sun-dial and dove-cote. A black servant in a livery coat admitted the young man; and from the passage he heard the voices of his uncle and Dr. King.

He was shown into a large room on the second floor. This was crowded with rare furniture; its hangings were rich and delightful to the eye; upon stands and shelves were examples of bronze and gold and pottery such as Anthony had never seen before. Charles greeted him.

"James," said the merchant to Dr. King, "here he is, come to visit me like a good fellow, forgetting all about how I've neglected him."

Dr. King shook Anthony's hand, smiling.

"At any rate," said he, "he shows the right disposition. And we should be glad enough to have him back."

As Anthony settled into a chair, Charles limped up and down the room in mounting excitement.

"I've heard of your damned goings-on," stated he, eagerly. "To-day, when you'd told me you'd been in the city almost a week, I was on the verge of commiserating you on your loneliness; and here I learn that you've left a trail of very active devilment strung out behind you." He paused in front of Anthony and clutched his shoulder exultantly.

“So you pummeled that infernal sneering fire-eater, Tarrant, did you? What for?”

“He intruded upon me, and refused to give an account of himself,” said Anthony. “And, I suppose, I was in no humor to listen to him.”

Once more Charles limped up and down; his eyes blazed with excitement.

“A porter saw you pitch him out!” cried Charles. “He saw you pitch him into the passage, and has told it all over town.” Here Charles filled the room with his laughter. “He saw you throw his hat after him,” he gasped between bursts; “and he had to help the damned villain to his feet, and down the stairs.” For a moment he choked back his mirth. “Out into the passage!” he said. “And with his hat after him! Oh, what a picture!” And again he laughed consumedly.

“You know him, then?” said Anthony.

His uncle composed himself, took a seat in a big chair, and nursed his lame foot.

“I have known him these five years,” said he. “And in that time I’ve found him to be a knave and a cheat. It’s true he once served aboard a United States frigate, and with some distinction; but a thing like that doesn’t light a man through a whole lifetime of roguery. His open doings are of that rakehell kind countenanced by many honest people as the outcomes of a large nature and high spirit. But his connections with the money-lenders and slimy shipping-agents of the Algerian coast are kept out of view and are known to only a few, and even those few don’t know enough to speak publicly against him. But,” and he looked at Anthony with narrowed eyes, “what of this answer you made to his challenge?”

“It was the answer I’d make to any man’s challenge.”

"You are not afraid, then," and the eyes of the uncle devoured him, "of being thought a coward?"

Anthony smiled.

"The man who is afraid of being thought one, is one," said he.

"By God!" said Charles. "That 's what your grandfather would have said! They are the very words."

Here Captain Weir was shown in, and after greeting Anthony he sat down at the far end of the room with the merchant, while Anthony talked with Dr. King.

"Well," said the physician humorously, "he seems to approve your doings, even though they 've been a trifle heady."

"At any rate," said the young man, "he is no friend of Tarrant's; and that is in my favor."

Dr. King lost his jocular expression, and shook his head gravely.

"The time was when the American merchant had only the elements, falling markets, and an occasional corsair to contend with," said he. "But, now that he is growing prosperous and takes his share of the world's wealth, the birds of prey have gathered. Let him show a sign, however slight, of financial weakness; then his sky is dark with them, their beaks whetted to pick his bones. This is the first hint I 've had that Tarrant is concerned with the filthy tribe; but I should n't wonder if it were true."

"I can understand money-lenders and note-shavers thriving in a port like New Orleans," said Anthony; "for under the hands of the Spanish governors honesty must always pay a toll. But in a city as well managed as this, where banks are numerous, why should a merchant in need of funds go to a usurer?"

Dr. King smiled and shook his head.

"After you are here a while,—if you make up your mind

to stay,—you may learn that even a soberly governed place like this has its public tricksters. There are many things a money-lender dare not do—openly. But it is the habit of some of them—as your uncle just now said of Tarrant—to carry on certain operations underground.”

The dining-room of Charles Stevens on the floor below was appointed with the same high-pitched taste as the others Anthony had seen; indeed, so lavish had become the exhibition of treasure that it resembled the heaped-up loot of a commercial conqueror.

“Every ship of ours that enters port carries something that I cannot find it in me to sell. It may be a rug, or a gold cup, a cushion, a bolt of rare silk, or an ivory or bronze carving. I have amulets and arms and precious stones from places that are in the books of few traders,” added Charles, who had read his nephew’s look. “Unfortunately,” and he laughed a little ruefully, “I am a collector, as well as a merchant.”

There was a soup of terrapin, into which a deft cook had introduced the faint fragrance of a very old sherry. Sturgeon steaks followed, with a wonderful sauce, and with them deviled oysters and a Johannisberger that made Anthony’s palate curl in rapture.

“So Siddons is appalled,” smiled Charles; he looked at Anthony, but addressed Weir. “Poor fellow, it does not take much to frighten him. Because he is asked to add some feet to his ship ways, he acts as though we required him to enlarge the solar system.”

“Perhaps,” observed Captain Weir, “it would be well to reconsider the thing, and put it into the hands of the Carters; they are younger and have moved with the times.”

But Charles smiled and shook his head.

“No,” said he. “The Siddons yard builds honest craft; they built the first my father designed, and so they’ll build

these for me. Properly prodded, they 'll do well enough; on launching-day you 'll find us in possession of a pair of well-found ships that 'll out-stow and perhaps outsail anything that carries the United States flag. Dick Siddons has always complained, but he has never failed me."

While other matters of food were being brought in, Charles Stevens talked. He was a fascinating talker; all history seemed at his finger ends, and especially the history of shipping. He drew dazzling pictures; events as recorded in his mind were always striking. He followed, at one period of the talk, the great movements of the armed world in the track of each fresh discovery of iron. The greed behind these movements, their terrifying injustices, the gross world fat they accumulated, the merciless labor they brought upon those who had no share in what their work produced, never seemed to present themselves to Charles. He saw only the surge of the thing, the sharp-pointing, definite track, the panoply and power that came into life, the romance in the thought that, snuggling beneath the surface, in places unthought of, except by a venturesome few, there lay the thing that made men great.

"He looks upon it," thought Anthony, "as the old Spaniards of the gulf must have regarded the idea of the fountain of life. It is a sort of magic."

Charles talked of ships and storms, of fabrics and ports, of men and nations, of ideas, prophecy, and signs in the heavens. Anthony followed his flowing words, enthralled by his enthusiasm and the rich color of his thought. But at the same time there was a spot in the young man's brain which remained alert and which the golden flood could not sweep away. And at this spot was an alert sentry, a direct inheritance from old Rufus; and this sentry watched and listened unemotionally. He saw a man moving with joy among the mountain-tops, drinking the thin, strong air as

one would drink a heady wine; he saw the long leaps, spectacular and full of grace, from peak to peak, the flashing symbols of victory upon victory. But he did not once see him set foot upon the level earth where the plodders sweated in obscurity. The man's dream was a soaring one, full of color and gorgeousness; he caught lightly at wonders which those who moved in the lower levels did not even see; but, once seized, he threw the wonder to the plodders, and seldom thought of them again.

"To this man," reported the sentry posted by old Rufus in Anthony's brain, "life is all heights. There are no depths. To him, great deed follows upon the heels of noble effort; magnificent achievement springs full-armed into being, glory is a thing made by a single motion. The romance of commerce, as Dr. King called it, he holds to his heart; the reality he leaves to others." Anthony followed this report soberly, for the sentry was one in whom he had great faith. And before he closed his wicket for the night the sentry added, "And I wonder who these people are, through whose hands the realities pass?"

There was a space, after the plates had been removed and the wine and tobacco were brought in, in which Charles took Dr. King into a room adjoining, to point out an example of the work of a Persian artist for whom he expressed great admiration, and Anthony was left with Captain Weir. There was a silence for a moment, and then Weir said:

"Your uncle is in one of his talkative moods to-night." His level gaze was fixed upon Anthony with inquiry, but from his mask no indication was to be had of what was in his mind. "When a man talks we are often able to get a definite impression of him," said Weir.

Anthony nodded, but said nothing. The other waited; then he proceeded.

"I talked with Dr. King for some time to-day. He told

me that he had tried to induce you to remain in the city and go into Rufus Stevens' Sons. I agreed with him that this was a thing greatly to be wished."

"What," asked Anthony, "do you think I could do that another could not?"

"I don't know," said Weir. "But I have a feeling that you are needed, and that the house is your natural place."

"But," said Anthony, "I do not know my uncle's attitude."

"He means to ask you to resume where your father stepped out. He's told me so." There was another short pause. "What answer will you give?" asked Weir.

"I'll do it," said Anthony.

And Weir, leaning across the table, gripped his hand.

"That's what I expected you to say," said he. "And I am very glad."

But as he turned away his head there was a glint in the green, stone-like eyes, a glint that Anthony did not see.

XII

A CRIER with a bell advanced through Dock Street; as the tongue monotonously *galing-galanged* against the sides of the bell, the man chanted with equal monotony:

“A hogshead of rum! To whom it may concern: a hogshead of fine Jamaica rum will be sold at vendue at the warehouse of William Stone, in Mulberry Street, at two o’clock to-day.”

“Another damned cutthroat must be asking for his pound of flesh!” grumbled a gentleman, whose bulbous nose was pinched blue with the snap of the cold. “Stone’s interest is no doubt due, and he ’s forced to send out a crier and sell a hogshead of liquor to keep the shark from turning over on his back.”

Mr. Sparhawk, who bore the blue-nosed gentleman company, smiled dryly.

“Mr. Stone, from what I hear of his affairs, need not bother himself. He ’s so safely in the hands of Bulfinch and his handsome sons that he has no more chance of escape, Mr. Stroude, than the north star has of falling out of the sky.”

Mr. Stroude swore eloquently.

“Bulfinch is a villain,” announced he. “And I wish his sons were at the devil!”

“There are a great many who are equally pious with regard to them,” said Mr. Sparhawk, “but at the same time the stairs leading to their den are wearing thinner and thinner under the tread of these same gentlemen’s feet.”

“I have merchandise to the value of eight thousand dol-

lars," protested Mr. Stroude gloomily, "and with it I have a good name in business. But can I borrow two thousand dollars in a reputable way? I can't! Will any institution in the city take my note on any terms that correspond with my position as a merchant? They will not! And why?" demanded Mr. Stroude of the world, as he swept it with his eye. "Why not? It is because the law permits them but a fair interest, but if they can force me to go to their secret co-worker, Bulfinch, they can make me pay as many times that as my necessity compels."

"Bulfinch is, I know, much favored among some financial people," admitted Mr. Sparhawk, with the perky manner of a small bird. "He has at command any sum that can be reasonably asked of him. And, for an accommodation like that, he feels bound to make his demands."

"But my heart's blood!" said Mr. Stroude, his nose going a very deep blue, indeed. "Must he have that?"

"Perhaps," soothed Mr. Sparhawk, "he will not go so far. At any rate, here we are, and you shall soon know."

Off Dock, at Third Street, was a group of old buildings, none in very good repair; through these a brick-paved thoroughfare cut its way. This was Harmony Court, and here a second group of buildings crouched behind the first, as though to avoid the full glare of day. There were a number of shabby tin signs upon a shutter, and perhaps the shabbiest of all bore the inscription: "Amos Bulfinch, Broker."

"So it's here our gentleman keeps himself," grumbled Mr. Stroude. "I knew it was in this neighborhood, but I didn't think it would give quite so dirty a promise."

Mr. Sparhawk led the way into a dim passage which smelt musty, and the walls of which were greasy with the touch of generations. When the perky gentleman said the steps leading to the place of business of Amos Bulfinch had been thinned by the tread of his patrons, he spoke the truth;

for thin they were, and very dirty as well. A dim oil lamp, on a landing, lighted the way; and at the top of the steps was a door upon which the money-lender's name occurred once more. They went in.

"Good morning," said Mr. Sparhawk, to a gangling-looking man who sat at a table upon which was spread a quantity of much-handled papers. "This is Mr. Nathaniel Bulfinch, son of Amos," to Stroude.

"Yes, I know," said Stroude. "Glad to see you."

Mr. Nathaniel Bulfinch smiled; his teeth were large, and there were wide spaces between them; his hands were enormous and covered with freckles; he had outstanding ears, an unruly thatch of coarse hair, and pale, watchful eyes.

"What name?" asked Mr. Nathaniel, as he shuffled eagerly among the dirty documents. "Is something due? Eh?"

"Not yet," said Stroude. "No, not yet."

"But," insinuated Mr. Sparhawk, "Mr. Stroude is hopeful."

Mr. Nathaniel laughed.

"They are always that," said he. "It's surprising how much hope is brought into this place."

"And very little is ever taken out again, I'll venture," mumbled Stroude, to himself. He looked about at the dirty walls, the worn furniture, the dusty files of papers hanging from hooks; the air of mean sordidness chilled him. "No," he thought, "no one ever took anything out of this place, unless it was a curse."

"I do not see your brother," said Mr. Sparhawk, of Nathaniel. "Where is Rehoboam?"

"He is going his rounds," said Nathaniel. "No one pays unless they're made to, and Rehoboam is apt at explaining the law. He knows its regulations very well," admiringly. "There are few solicitors who have a defter turn for it. He can tell to the breadth of a hair how much a man may delay

in the matter of a debt before the prison keepers may put their hands upon him."

"A pretty talent!" said Stroude. Then, in his thoughts, he added, "I wonder what length of time a man must serve as the devil's acolyte before he reaches so much wisdom as that."

Sparhawk and Stroude sat down, and Nathaniel began thumbing his dirty papers with much the same enjoyment a gourmand shows in eating a dainty dish. There was a soothing voice lifted in an inner room, dimly heard, yet full of assuring sweetness.

"That," whispered Sparhawk to Stroude, "is old Amos."

"I know," nodded Stroude. "I've heard him before, though he's never had occasion to use his honey on me."

Answering the money-lender was a quavering voice, decidedly French in accent, and pitched to a note of anxiety.

"I am not known here," said the quavering voice, "except by Rufus Stevens' Sons. With them I have moneys invested. But there are reasons why I should ask no favors of them."

"To get a name upon the back of a note is no favor," explained the sweet voice. "No favor at all. It is a matter of business."

"There is no one but them; and to them I will not go," said the quavering voice, with a deal of native decision. "I am sorry to have intruded upon you, monsieur, and taken your time."

There was a scraping of chair-legs upon the floor; then the money-lender was heard to say:

"Wait! do not be in haste, Monsieur Lafargue. Let us consider. Mr. Tarrant sent you here, and Mr. Tarrant is my very good friend. I would go greatly out of my way to oblige him. Of course, to have Rufus Stevens' Sons upon your note would be desirable; but as this is an exceptional

case we 'll say no more about it. What sum did you say you required?"

Nathaniel paused in his thumbing of his documents; his wide mouth hung open, surprisedly, as he listened.

"What?" whispered Stroude. "What? Old Bulfinch lend money without a sponsor?"

But Sparhawk, whose perky manner seemed suddenly frozen into one of interest, motioned him to be still.

"One thousand dollars," said Monsieur Lafargue, "for six months."

"It is a good sum," said the money-lender. "It 's a round sum. But, as Mr. Tarrant speaks for you—"

"Wait," said the old Frenchman. "Let it be understood, sir, that Mr. Tarrant does not vouch for me. My acquaintance with him has been quite brief."

"Mr. Tarrant *vouch* for you!" the money-lender was heard to laugh; and his gangling son, outside, giggled, and winked his pale eyes in great enjoyment. "No, I understand that, monsieur. But I have heard that you were this nation 's friend when it needed a friend in France during our days of struggle; also it 's been said that you helped forward the cause of the people in your own country; and these things mean a deal to a republican like me."

Stroude seemed stupefied by these virtuous sentiments; Sparhawk pursed up his lips and closed his eyes reflectively. The jaw of Nathaniel once more hung open in surprise.

"Sign your name to that," resumed the money-lender, "and you shall have the money in hand."

There was a sound of some one getting up, the snapping back of locks, and the groaning of heavy hinges. Papers rustled and gold chinked on a table. Then the strong box was closed and the bolts were re-shot into their sockets.

"Well, now," said the soothing voice, "that is done with.

There I have your note of hand, monsieur, and you have my money."

"With the conditions what they are," said Monsieur Lafargue, "I am astonished at your generous treatment of me. We do not transact business upon such principles in France."

"No more do we here," said the money lender, "except upon such occasions as this. But we must do our best by our French friends, more especially when they, in turn, are friends of so distinguished a patriot as Citizen Genêt." Sparhawk, who had continued to sit with closed eyes, now opened them, narrowly; his breath all but stopped. "You are a friend of the citizen's, are you not?" asked the money-lender in his sweetest voice.

"We have known each other many years," said Lafargue.

"To know a patriot like that must give a deal of satisfaction," said the money-lender. "A great deal of satisfaction, indeed."

A few moments later the door of the inner room opened, and Monsieur Lafargue, infirm but holding his white head up with his customary air, came out. Following him was Amos Bulfinch.

"Mr. Sparhawk," said the latter with a little bow, "I'm pleased to see you here. And you, sir," urbanely, to the frowning Stroude. Then turning to Nathaniel, he added, "My son, the stairs are dark and not quite safe for a gentleman of Monsieur Lafargue's years. Will you go with him, down into the court?"

Monsieur Lafargue protested; but Nathaniel reared himself up to his gangling height and took one of the old Frenchman's arms in his clutch.

"It's no trouble," grinned he, showing his large teeth, with the spaces between. "I'll have you down in a moment."

Their steps were still sounding upon the stairs when Amos Bulfinch turned his mild look upon Mr. Sparhawk and then upon Stroude; and a close observer would have noticed that it rested longer and with greater interest upon Stroude.

"A trifling matter of business," explained Mr. Sparhawk. "Mr. Stroude desired me to introduce him. You've heard of him, maybe."

"Often," said Amos in his sweet voice. "Glass, and crockery, and imported ware in Mulberry Street. A fine, profitable business, very active, and not overcrowded."

Stroude was about to answer this, but Sparhawk stopped him.

"You are quite right," said Mr. Sparhawk. "It's an excellent business, and prospering. But there come times in mercantile life," with a little gesture of regret, "when ready money must be reckoned with."

"That is true, Mr. Sparhawk," said Amos soothingly. "Not a day passes but that is brought home to me."

"What would you say," added Mr. Sparhawk, "to loaning Mr. Stroude a matter of three thousand dollars—gold?"

"How soon?" asked Amos Bulfinch, looking at Stroude in a most beneficent manner.

"To-day," said the merchant.

"To-day? Impossible! That is the way with all of them," to Mr. Sparhawk. "They think I have only to pick the money up. What security is there?"

Mr. Stroud displayed some documents, which Amos studied minutely. Nathaniel reëntered just then; and he also gave the matter the closest attention.

"And what names?" asked the money-lender. "Of course, they must be good ones."

Stroude grudgingly mentioned one or two; and father and son shook their heads at each other.

"We have them already," said Amos.

"A half-dozen times," said Nathaniel. "They won't do."

"My people object to the same name so often," said Amos. "They are very strict. And when they object the rate goes up."

Stroude writhed at this, and Sparhawk asked:

"How high?"

The money-lender, who still had Stroude's paper in his hand, folded it one third.

"Oh, no," said Sparhawk. "Oh, dear, no!"

"There are, besides, interests, costs, and other things," said Amos in his honeyed way. "It is too bad. Maybe your friend had better go somewhere else."

"They may treat him better," suggested Nathaniel with disbelief.

Stroude's blue nose paled.

"But a charge like that!" protested he. "It's monstrous!"

"Added to it," said Amos, still fingering the paper, "there are apt to be brokerage charges, besides, there is my small portion to be fixed upon it finally."

He folded the paper in two and stood creasing it between thumb and forefinger while Stroude began to choke and to pull at his neck-cloth feebly.

"Perhaps you'd better not favor us," said Amos. "We never advise anything."

"Terms are always plainly stated," said Nathan; "and patrons are left to use their own judgment."

"Well?" asked Mr. Sparhawk of Stroude.

"Can I get the money to-day?" asked the merchant, his trembling hand still fumbling with the neck-cloth. "To-day, without fail?"

"It will be at your office in one hour," said Amos Bulfinch, soothingly. "I will send for it at once." Under his father's directions, Nathaniel sat down at his table and made

out the note; when it was ready, it was passed over to Stroude, who read and buttoned it up in his breast pocket.

“My son, Rehoboam, will pay the money over to you,” said the leech; “and I would ask, Mr. Stroude, that you have the necessary signatures ready affixed, to avoid delay.”

Stroude stumbled a little as he went down the stairs; and the perky little Mr. Sparhawk carried a wrinkle of interrogation between his eyes as he went with him.

XIII

IN the window at Christopher Dent's, among the gray dried herbs, the crooked, moisture-seeking roots, the barks and flowers, there had stood for a long time a small board upon which had been carefully lettered the information that upon the second floor desirable lodgings were to be had.

"Clean and roomy," Christopher described them in his talk. "And not of too great cost. The furnishings are not sumptuous, but are adequate to a modest taste; and any one inclined to occupy the premises must be so adjusted as to see no harm in occasional fumes resulting from the distilling, simmering, fermenting, or otherwise compounding of curative drugs, medicines, or chemicals. Any one of such a habit of mind will find themselves reasonably well bestowed." The board, however, had now disappeared from the window; this hinted at the second floor's being occupied; and a glance upward carried the hint to the border of certainty. The shutters were all open; and lights were seen behind trim white curtains, Water Street was quiet of an evening; the drays had ceased to trundle over the stones; porters, clerks, and merchants, who had all day been matching themselves against the mounds of goods that grew before the warehouses, the bills and figures and entries that crowded the desks of the counting-rooms, and the wits and wants of buyers, sellers, and agents, had all melted from view, into their homes, or into the bars or eating-rooms of favorite taverns.

Christopher Dent sat in his back room, his spectacles upon his nose, and a big book in Latin text upon his knee. A cheery fire crackled in the stove; two candles burned upon the table; and a number of other books, each as big as the one Christopher held, lay beside them. Outside the yellow flare lurked the retorts, the rows of bottles and jars full of pent-up possibilities, still and waiting. Tom Horn sat upon a bench near the stove; he rubbed his knees in the warmth, as the little apothecary looked at him over the edge of his spectacles.

"In none of the elder tongues," said Christopher, "is there much to do with the sea. As you say, the ancients were wise; they had a knowledge of many strange things; but they seldom ventured far from land, and so the sea as we know it was a darkened thing to them. So, knowing nothing of its secrets, they could scarcely agree with you. Bear in mind," said Christopher earnestly, "I am not denying; I only announce a lack of authority in the ancients."

"The sea," said Tom Horn in his hushed voice, "has a meaning. It is more than a mass of water, washing around in the hollows of the world."

"I grant you that," said Christopher readily. "I grant you that much active principle is in the sea; it holds many vital elements, crystallized or in solution. Soda, for example, is the cinder of sea-plants; and without this friendly alkali we'd many times be brought to a stand. The ocean gives rare and agreeable substances to *materia medica*, and in time, as we plumb its depths, it will give more."

But Tom Horn shook his head at this conception.

"I have watched the sea with the sun on it," he said; "and I've watched it running through the night. Hurricanes blow over it and make it leap and rave; but hurricanes die down, and the sea goes on. It is always muttering," said Tom Horn. "I've listened to it, hour after hour; it's

always muttering over something it has hidden. But it never tells; it keeps its secrets well."

"The moon guides the ocean's tides," said Christopher. "And the wind ruffles or smooths its surface. It does nothing of itself."

"That is a common error," said Tom Horn, "and held to by men who have not watched, and seen, and listened. The sea slips around the world in a circle. It touches and knows all things. And inside the great circle there are many smaller ones, all moving the same way." He leaned forward in his chair so that his face was close to Christopher. "The world moves that way, too—does it not?—round and round. And so do the stars, and the moon, and the wind." There was a little pause, and then Tom Horn's hushed voice grew more whisper-like than ever. "Who ever saw a circle begin?" said he. "Did you?"

The little apothecary looked perplexed, and regarded his questioner seriously over the lenses of his spectacles.

"No one ever did," said Tom Horn, "because they begin outside the world's rim. The circle of your life, now, began ages before you were born, and in the emptiness of space. It grew narrower as it neared the earth, and the day it touched its surface you began to live. And so it went around and around, and so it continues to go around and around; it keeps growing narrower and narrower, as it has done from the first; it gets tighter and tighter about you. And one day it will close, and so disappear, upon a little spot of ground, in a quiet place. And there you will lie."

"Thankfully, I hope, and untroubled," said Christopher Dent soberly. "And with the little that's been given me to do well accomplished."

The street door opened, and Christopher went into the store.

"Good evening, Mr. Sparhawk," said he.

"Good evening," said Mr. Sparhawk in his perky little way. "I hope I find you very well, Christopher."

"Quite," said Christopher. "Never better, indeed."

"And prosperous, too, I trust."

The little apothecary moved his hand toward his store of dried plants.

"The fields," said he, "and the roadsides and thickets and stream margins have never in my day given themselves so completely to medicinal production. During the spring and summer the earth teemed with curative power, and I harvested abundantly."

Mr. Sparhawk rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"Excellent," said he. "I am delighted to hear it. And, I think," said he, wisely, "I see the law of compensation at work in what you say; if nature brings us a sickly season such as we've seen of late she makes up for it in her lavish gifts of healing agents. Nature is remarkable," and Mr. Sparhawk wagged his head, "and the more minutely she is studied, the more remarkable she becomes."

The apothecary agreed to this readily enough, and advanced testimony containing instances proving how really remarkable she was.

"And that you are prospering, Christopher," said Mr. Sparhawk, halting the testimony at the first opportunity, "is gratifying. But," and he looked about with his lips pursed primly, "to have fat stores is one thing, and custom is another. I hope trade is active with you." Christopher nodded, and Mr. Sparhawk, much pleased, nodded in return. "Excellent!" said he. "That is good. Of course, in a profession such as yours,—and a most interesting and necessary profession,—custom must be active if one's income is to retain a proper level."

"Usually that is true," said Christopher. "But," and he beamed through his spectacles, "just now I am not forced to depend upon my trade alone."

"Ah!" Mr. Sparhawk looked both surprised and expectant. "I see. You have other sources of revenue, then?"

"Yes," said Christopher. "Lodgers."

"Lodgers!" Mr. Sparhawk now looked more surprised than ever. "So you have taken in lodgers?"

Christopher pointed toward the ceiling.

"Two of them," he said. "French people."

"Two Frenchmen," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Well, well!"

"One Frenchman, and his daughter," Christopher informed him. "The name is Lafargue."

"I have heard of them," nodded Mr. Sparhawk. "Quite genteel people, I think; and the father is engaged in a commercial way with some one in the city. So they are lodged in your house? Well, well, I am glad to hear it. You have been too much alone this long time, Christopher; and that is not good for a man. Now, these people will not only add to your income, but they'll give you some one to chat with. That will be a pleasure. For I suppose," and Mr. Sparhawk smiled agreeably at the little apothecary, "you do chat together?"

"I have spoken with them," said Christopher.

"Of course you have. That is quite right. They are very presentable people, as I have said, and are well circumstanced in their own country. I suppose they have come to America upon matters of pressing importance."

"I don't know," said Christopher Dent.

"Surely," said Mr. Sparhawk persuasively, "they have at some time or other asked you for some small item of information that would give you an idea of their mission."

"Why, no," said the little apothecary. "They have not."

They are people who keep themselves to themselves a great deal."

"I see," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Yes, yes, I see."

He then changed the subject and talked of trade in general, the coming winter, of the lighting of the streets, of the watch. And then of crime.

"Time was," said he, "when actual crime of any sort was rare among us. But, now, we've reached a point where even those of violence cause no more than a flurry. Take that affair of Magruder, now—an honest, thriving man. Some one enters his place while he is engaged with his work, and in an instant stops his life. The coroner's jury speaks harshly against the criminals and invites all law-abiding people to bring them to justice. But it will take more than a declaration of indignation and a summons to civic reprisal to effect any good. The persons guilty of this action are still at large and, from all appearances, are likely to remain so."

The little apothecary shook his head and looked perturbed.

"Dear, dear," said he. "A pretty pass, indeed. I suspect the safety of the streets, for all they are so well lit, and so told Monsieur Lafargue, as he went out to-night."

"He has gone out, then?" said Mr. Sparhawk, and there was interest in his face.

"A half-hour or more ago," replied Christopher. "And he seemed quite infirm, and made much use of his cane."

Mr. Sparhawk now made some trifling purchase and left the shop. Christopher returned to the back room. Tom was staring at the blaze through the open door of the stove; without turning his head, or shifting his eyes, he said:

"That was Sparhawk."

"Yes," said Christopher. "An agreeable person. He's considerate of everything and every one."

There was a little pause, and then Tom Horn said:

“Why did he ask about your lodgers?”

“He didn’t,” stated the apothecary mildly. “I mentioned them.”

“He made you do it,” said Tom Horn. “I heard him.”

Christopher Dent blinked at his friend in surprise and rubbed his bald head.

“Last night,” said Tom, “I went to the Boatswain-and-Call after I left the counting-room. I always go there for my supper. Mr. Sparhawk was in the bar.”

“Of the Boatswain-and-Call?” said Christopher. “What was he doing there?”

“He had a mug of ale, a thick cut of bread, and the leg of a fowl. But, for all he ate with good appetite, he was n’t there for that. No, it was to talk with me.”

“Did he tell you so?” asked the apothecary.

“No,” said Tom Horn. “He didn’t need to.”

Just then the subdued *rat-tat-tat* of a knocker sounded.

“Listen!” said Tom, though he never moved and never took his gaze from the fire.

“It’s at the side door,” exclaimed Christopher. “A visitor for my lodgers.”

“Sparhawk,” said Tom Horn. And while Christopher gazed at his friend, astonished, steps were heard descending a stairway; there was a murmur of voices, and then the stairs creaked under a double burden. “He knew last night they were lodged here,” said Tom Horn. “I told him so.”

“Do you think,” said Christopher incredulously, “that was what he wanted to talk about?”

“It was partly that,” nodded Tom. “But mainly it was about what they were doing in this country. He made me tell what I knew, without asking, just as he made you a few moments ago.”

Christopher Dent looked completely mystified.

"It is all very odd," said he. "I wonder what he has in his mind?"

"Aye, I wonder," said Tom Horn, his gaze never leaving the flame in the open stove. "I wonder, indeed."

XIV

MR. Sparhawk had carefully closed the door of the apothecary shop and had passed the window with the leisurely air of a man who has satisfactorily transacted his business. But while still only a few steps away he had paused; then he went to the side door and knocked the *rat-tat-tat* which Tom Horn and the apothecary had heard.

A quadroon maid answered. Was Monsieur Lafargue at home? No, he was not. But Mademoiselle Lafargue was. Perhaps the gentleman would care to see her? Yes, it so happened after some consideration the gentleman would; and he was led up-stairs and asked to wait in a room into which the staircase opened. In a few moments Mademoiselle Lafargue appeared. She was taller than Mr. Sparhawk, and dressed in a robe that was not common in the houses of American women of that time. Her fine dark eyes were full of questioning as she looked at the visitor.

"I hope I don't intrude," said Mr. Sparhawk. "It's a matter of business that might not wait with profit."

"Will you sit down?" said the girl.

They sat down. Mr. Sparhawk settled himself comfortably, and put his finger-tips precisely together; then he regarded the girl with careful attention.

"You are the daughter of Jean Edouard Lafargue, citizen of Brest, I understand?"

"Yes," said the girl.

"He is, and has been, agent in France for the commercial

house of Rufus Stevens' Sons," stated Mr. Sparhawk gravely, "and is in America on business having to do with that concern."

There was a shadow in the girl's eyes; but her voice was level and unchanged as she said:

"Am I to understand that you are its representative?"

"By no means," said Mr. Sparhawk. "I would not have you understand that for the world, because such would not be the fact. I do *not* represent it."

"It was your confidence as to my father's business that made me suppose it," said the girl quietly.

"I've mentioned his connection that we might put things on a solid footing; that is all." He nodded in his perky, bird-like way, and his finger-tips sought an even more perfect contact. "I desired you to know that I held him in high esteem; every one having to do with that excellent house is held in high esteem."

"So I have been told," said the girl, but there was bitterness in her voice.

"If you will pardon my calling the matter up," said Mr. Sparhawk in a most confidential way, "and I only call it up because I cannot go on without doing so, your father's procedure since reaching the city has been somewhat unusual. It has caused comment. He is a trusted agent of Rufus Stevens' Sons, and has been these many years; and yet, though he's been in the city a week, he has not yet called at their counting-house."

"You say you do not speak for my father's business connections," said the girl; "indeed, you do not say in whose interests you are here; and yet you do not hesitate to inquire into a thing that must, of its nature, be private."

Mr. Sparhawk held up one open hand in protest; his face wore a look of pain.

"My dear young lady," said he, "pray do not think me

guilty of an idle impertinence. Nothing could be further from my thoughts. I've said what I said because it is the readiest way I can summon just now as an approach to a very delicate—an exceedingly delicate—subject." He regarded her with careful attention. "The Atlantic is wide," he observed; "and in these unsettled days it is also much troubled. A man does not venture upon the ocean now, especially with his daughter, without good reason. That is common sense. And yet we find, in this instance of your father's so doing, that no sufficient reason has shown itself. If a firm summons its agent he is, in commercial duty, bound to obey. But Rufus Stevens' Sons has not summoned your father. In fact, some in the firm are somewhat aghast at his appearance."

"Well?" said the girl, quietly.

"It has been observed—quite by chance, of course—that in the time Monsieur Lefargue has been in the city he has ventured abroad upon only a few occasions."

"He is old," said the girl.

"I have noted that," said Mr. Sparhawk cheerfully. "And I sympathize with his infirmities. I have heard talk," he added, after a moment's reflection, "connecting your father with Monsieur—or, as the revolutionary manner has it, Citizen—Genêt. This gentleman and he," and the little man's head took the inquiring bird-like tilt, "are fast friends, I think."

"Well?" said the girl.

Mr. Sparhawk had evidently expected more or less enlightenment on this point; but now that he saw none was forthcoming he proceeded with adroit readiness.

"To-day your father visited another person, Mr. Amos Bulfinch, a usurer!"

The girl arose suddenly, but before she could speak Mr. Sparhawk once more lifted the protesting hand.

"If you will favor me with one more instant," said he. Then, as she stood looking at him: "Thank you. It would seem," said he, "there was one other person upon whom your father called since he's been in the city; and, if reports speak truly, the circumstances of the visit were peculiar. The person I refer to was one Magruder, a merchant, now dead."

The girl sat down; her face was very white.

"My father did not know Mr. Magruder," she said. "He never so much as saw him."

"The late night," said Mr. Sparhawk, "is commonly spoken of as the silent hours. But, while these hours have no voice, it has been shown time and again that they have many eyes. And on that particular night these eyes seem to have been more than usually vigilant. It is said," and Mr. Sparhawk nodded his head, and looked exceedingly unwilling to credit it, "that upon this visit you bore your father company."

There was a pause of some duration; the girl sat very still, and her gaze never ceased from searching the man's face. Mr. Sparhawk was quite composed; he tilted his head and looked exceedingly prim, and he pressed his finger-tips together with the utmost nicety of adjustment.

"Are you of the police?" asked Mademoiselle Lafargue.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Sparhawk. "No! Whatever made you think of such a thing?"

"What is your errand here?" said the girl.

"We shall reach that by and by," said Mr. Sparhawk reassuringly. "Never fear, we shall come to it in due course." He nodded his head; his whole expression and manner indicating that here, at least, was one matter that would be properly attended to when its turn came—attended to and settled, once and for all. "You say," said Mr. Sparhawk, "that your father did not know Mr. Magruder; indeed, he'd never seen him. Very well. Suppose we accept that state-

ment and pass on." Mr. Sparhawk seemed to test his footing at this new point of advance; and, apparently convinced that it was safe, he said, "Had your father and Magruder ever had any correspondence?"

"I know very little of my father's business affairs," said the girl.

"Why, of course, that would be so," agreed Mr. Sparhawk. "I am glad you've mentioned it." Then he shook his head, and looked disturbed. "I wish, though, it had been otherwise. Your father's proposed call upon this man—and, God save us! what an unfortunate time he took for it!—would indicate that some writings had passed between them."

The girl said nothing. Mr. Sparhawk pondered, his head continuing to shake dubiously.

"It is peculiar," said he, "that your father should appear so unexpectedly in this country. It would almost seem," and he looked at the girl with elevated brows and a face of mild interest, "that he had been sent for." Once more the girl failed to speak, and he went on. "But, then, that is most unlikely. Who would send for him, if it were not Rufus Stevens' Sons? and that they did not is shown by their amazement at his appearance."

Mr. Sparhawk during the next fifteen minutes said a number of things; he said some of them gently, others were uttered guardedly, still others had that insinuating quality which usually forces an answer. But the girl merely sat and listened, her eyes fixed upon Mr. Sparhawk's face. At length he arose to go; and then she spoke.

"If it is common rumor that my father and myself were seen at Mr. Magruder's place of business on the night of his death, why do not the police of the city take action?"

"It is not common rumor," stated Mr. Sparhawk. "Far from it. There is a whisper going about that a woman is somehow concerned; but it is only a whisper, and a vague

one. Neither your father's name nor yours has been mentioned. And the reason for this," Mr. Sparhawk smoothed the nap of his hat with careful touch, "is that, excepting those who saw you, no one knows them in connection with the matter but myself."

The girl regarded him quietly.

"In that you are wrong," she said. "There is, at least, one other person who knows."

"No!" said Mr. Sparhawk, and his leisurely manner became suddenly swift. "No!"

"At least one other," repeated the girl. "He mentioned it to me several days ago!"

"May I ask," and Mr. Sparhawk tilted his head sideways with his bird-like manner, "who it was?"

"Captain Weir," said the girl.

"I see," said Mr. Sparhawk, softly; "I see."

And when he had bidden the girl good night, and the maid had shown him down-stairs, and he stood in Water Street, buttoning up his coat against the chill air, Mr. Sparhawk once more carried between his brows the little frown of interrogation.

XV

WINTER crept in. The water in the docks froze; later, great white blocks were drifting in the river. Then, one bitter night, the stream was sealed, and shipping was over until the spring, or some unlooked-for stretch of mild weather.

Anthony had changed his quarters to a neat old house in Sassafras Street, where he had a bedroom facing the west, and a small snuggery with a window overlooking the south. Each morning, while the bells in the towers were ringing seven, his boots were crunching through the frozen snow on the way to Rufus Stevens' Sons. Always, by half-past seven on the word of the clock on the counting-house wall, he'd reached there, hung his great blue coat in a closet, and whipped into the work at hand.

There never was such a counting-house for order as Rufus Stevens' Sons. Anthony found that out when he'd only been there a few days. Its ledgers were models; its clerks had the vanity of perfection; its windows shone like crystal, the floor planks were white with scrubbing, and its brass work snapped with the light from fireplaces whose hearths were ever swept clean of smut.

The deep, cave-like warehouses were equally well kept; the goods in cases, barrels, and bales were ranked in massive and severe array; the carts and drays were smart with paint, their horses strong and well conditioned.

Anthony's place in the counting-house was somewhat unsettled; the business was so methodical, so well arranged that a new hand, no matter what it touched, or how lightly, seemed

superfluous. And this very fact he was quick to seize upon, and turn to his purpose.

"I don't think I'll have any real use here," he told his uncle, "until I can digest the history of the house; I'll have, especially, to arrange in my mind all its doings of a decade past. I want to grow up with it, in a sense."

Charles smiled at this. Weir's stone-like eyes were fixed on the young man's face in an oddly watchful way.

"That has a very thorough sound," Charles said. "But," with a shake of the head, "it implies a deal of labor."

"I can understand his attitude," said Captain Weir quite gravely. "There is nothing like becoming saturated with the thing one starts out to understand." To Anthony he said, and there was now nothing but encouragement in the singular eyes, "Your plan is an excellent one; and, fortunately, you can escape most of the drudgery of it, for there are people still in the employ of the house who can tell you all you'll need to know."

Anthony permitted himself to drift with the measured trade of the winter months, and, during this time, he looked about him. Those who saw to the routine in the counting-room were Whitaker, a new-comer in the place; the affable man—who Anthony learned was named Griggs; and then there was Tom Horn, who stood all day at his tall desk and entered items in his books; also a gray, quiet man named Twitchell, who had a great pride in the house and glowed when it was spoken of. Anthony began with Whitaker and carefully led him into speech.

"Of course," said the fop, as he played with a bunch of seals at his watch-fob, "my service only goes back five years; and most of that was spent in other places. This is a great house; every one says so. I never had any trouble disposing of cargo; and I never had any trouble securing accounts. Of course there were those two ships that went down—very

unfortunate occurrences. Oh, yes, it's a very considerable house."

Whitaker then went on to speak of the ports he'd visited in the firm's service, the food to be had in them, the beauty of their women, and the splendor of their climates. Cooling drinks under the shade of awnings, with dusky servants to fan one; strange, sweet music that stole through languorous nights; journeys into the interior on the invitation of merchants or agents; the magnificence of the lives of the rajahs: robes studded with jewels; carpets worth fabulous sums, thrown upon the ground; harems crowded with loveliness; dark eyes everywhere; adventure; whisperings; wealth; plenty; little effort.

But there was nothing that attracted the sharply focussed mind of Anthony. He noted that Whitaker was one who never saw the reality of anything in which he was engaged, except by accident. For a time Anthony strove to come upon such an occasion; but, except for the loss of the *Two Brothers*, and the *Sea Mew*, there was nothing outstanding.

"It was a singular chance," said Whitaker, "those two ships going down. I've often thought about it. Both were well found, finely officered, with American crews. Rich cargoes, too, and fully insured."

"Then there was no loss," said Anthony.

"Not a dollar, except to the insurance people."

There was another point upon which Anthony desired information; and he carefully led Whitaker to it.

"You had a narrow escape with the *Sea Mew*," said he. "Your not sailing in her from Lisbon was quite providential."

"I'd gone down like a stone," said the dandy. "It was only the house's hurry to get me to Brest, with those papers for Lafargue, that saved me."

"I remember you mentioned some papers," said Anthony, "but I forget what you said they were."

Whitaker took on the same resentful look he 'd worn when he first spoke of the matter at Dr. King's.

"I never knew," said he. "Devil of a way, was n't it? sending me pelting off like that, and never knowing what it was about. I felt like a fool! And that old Lafargue's a close-mouthed gentleman, I can tell you. No danger of any one ever worming anything out of him."

"You thought yourself badly treated, then?" said Anthony.

"Candidly, I did."

"Have you ever said so, here in the counting-house, to any one in authority?"

"Yes, once in a conversation with Mr. Weir I saw an opportunity to mention the matter, and did so. Mr. Weir is always considerate and listened to what I had to say. Then he told me I 'd better speak to Mr. Stevens. But, you know, Mr. Stevens seldom bothers about things like that; so I took the thing no further. I have no doubt, though, that I was treated like a junior clerk; for whatever the word was I took to Lafargue it made a particular stir in his place of business."

"Did you ask no questions, then?"

"You may be sure I did. But no one answered them. It was quite mortifying."

One day, at the hour for such things, Anthony found himself in a snug corner of a near-by ale house; quite by chance the affable clerk, Griggs, who had also come in for a snack, was seated beside him. Griggs seemed quite put out of countenance by the weather.

"The ice in the river," said he, "is so thick that the whole population seems skating on it of a night. Access to the Jerseys is very easy now; carts are going to and fro by the dozens; and venison and wild fowl are very cheap. But when will an anchor be lifted? When will another ship get up, to discharge her merchandise? They say the ice is solid all the way to New Castle."

"And yet," said Anthony, "you must have seen many a winter that was as bad."

Griggs nodded. He was of that comfortable temper that loves reminiscence; and, then, his mug of ale was mulled to his liking, hot and delectable, and smelling of ginger, a drink well suited to keeping the winter out of the system.

"The last winter Clinton's men held the city was a cold one," said he. "You are too young to recall it. Their big ships of war were so thick with ice that it looked as though they were to be cased in it forever. I try not to speak ill of any one," said the affable clerk, "but those men of Clinton's were a loutish lot; such guzzlers of malt liquor you never saw. You 'd thought, from the way they acted, that a plain man such as myself hadn't so much as a mouth on him. In the spring, when the ice had gone, they left; and glad enough we were to see their backs. Your grandfather was one of the first to come tearing into the city afterwards; they 'd driven him out two years before, and he 'd carried on what business he could from Baltimore, New London, and other places. I sat in this very bar, with a mug of this selfsame ale in my hand, and saw him go by on a fine roan horse. In a fortnight those of his ships that were left were running in and out, around the capes, under the very noses of the blockaders. He was a forthright man, was old Mr. Stevens."

"Was it after that time that you came into his employ?" asked Anthony.

"Oh, no," said Griggs. "Before. In fact, Tom Horn and myself have almost grown up in Rufus Stevens' Sons. I was a boy, keeping tally on the docks, when your grandfather was still master of one of Brownlow's ships; an Indiaman, she was. And when he began to adventure for himself he selected me to be clerk in his counting-room. And very proud I was of it."

"Have you always been stationed in the city?"

"Always, except for a few times when I went in a schooner to Havana, or one of the islands, to see to some small matter."

"I understand the house is one that's always been quite steady—that there's been few ups and downs."

"No house has had fewer," said Griggs. "A solid, stable business, if there ever was one. Of course," with a deprecating wave of the hand, "there have been flurries now and then. Little things, that were somewhat annoying. But, then, one can't always control excitable people."

"Flurries!" said Anththony, his interest fixed. "What sort of flurries? And who were the people who were excited?"

"Misfortune, at times, overtakes every one," said the affable clerk. "And we have had our full share of it on the sea, from time to time. Ships have been lost, and there have been discussions about insurance, and such-like."

"I see; the excited persons were insurance people." Anthony stroked his long jaw. "What were the discussions about?"

Griggs gestured his contempt.

"Why, I don't rightly know," said he. "I make it a rule never to listen to foolish clacking. If a ship is lost, say I, she's lost; and the insurance should be paid over without delay. A few times—in the matter of the *Sea Mew*, particularly—I was afraid these people would grow offensive with their prying and their questioning. Mr. Sparhawk, who is well known to your uncle, seemed to be specially forward in this. I don't see how Captain Weir kept his patience at times, for it was usually the captain who received him, and Mr. Sparhawk's persistence must have been very trying."

Sparhawk! Anthony recalled the perky little man whom he had met at Dr. King's, and he stored the name away for future reference. This conversation with Griggs occupied the best part of an hour, but Anthony got nothing from it; several times during the same week he returned to the task,

but the result was the same. Griggs was a good-natured, honest, competent man in his work, but thick-headed.

And so Anthony turned to Twitchell. When the subject of the house was touched upon, the gray old clerk began to beam. It was, so he held, a model for all other establishments; and that it was so highly regarded was most gratifying. When one mentioned its name to any one, a sound footing was entered upon at once. It was a pleasure to be connected with such a house; indeed, it was almost like being in government employ. And its ships were so famous! The merchandise it dealt in was so sought after! And every one about the premises, from the boy who swept the warehouse to the head of the business, had some jolly or endearing quality, so that it was the most enjoyable thing imaginable to be associated with them.

Twitchell, with his silver-rimmed spectacles mounted upon his forehead, and his quill underscoring in the air all his points, maintained this level of unalloyed gratification and belief whenever Anthony approached the subject which interested him most. And finally the young man gave it up and took to sitting at a window and glowering at the winter street, the ice-choked river, and the empty ships, hung with their thousand crystal points of light.

"First I have a dandy," growled Anthony, "who thinks of little but dress, pretty women, and his own importance. Next, a good-natured dunce; then a kindly soul, blinded by his own optimism. None of them ever see anything except what they are asked to see; and so what chance have I of coming on anything by way of them."

Of course there was still Tom Horn. And Anthony smiled as he thought of him. Tom Horn never spoke to any one unless he was spoken to. All day he added, and subtracted, and multiplied, and dotted his "i's" and crossed his "t's." His white, nervous hands seemed tireless; his thin body was

bent over the high desk where the great books of the house lay open before him. On the first morning Anthony spent in the counting-room Griggs said, behind his hand:

“Don’t mind Tom. A kindly chap and harmless, but queer.”

Once Anthony mentioned the man to his uncle; Charles smiled and said:

“Poor Tom! I’m very fond of him. But I’m afraid there is too much moon-glow in his mind. He was shipwrecked once, and I think that was the cause of it. But he’s a shrewd hand at accounts; I’ve seen no better anywhere, and he’s as dependable as might be. But he’s queer.”

The queerness Anthony was prepared to grant; but after a few days in the place, when he’d got settled down sufficiently to notice details, he began to feel it manifest itself in ways that carried a disquieting touch. Should he pass Tom Horn’s desk, Anthony would see him bent over, scratching away at his figures; but as soon as the young man got by he had the feeling that the bent head had been lifted and that the man was following him with his eyes. Sometimes Anthony would sit with a heap of the routine work of the place before him or turning some vexed thing over in his mind; then an odd, restless feeling would come over him, and he’d look up, irritated. Over the edge of the tall desk he’d see the peculiarly glowing eyes of the man fixed upon him. This Anthony noted quite often, and in various ways. In the street he’d see Tom Horn standing behind a bale of goods or a hogshead, watching him guardedly; or it might be that his vantage-place would be a doorway, or behind the jutting edge of a sharp window. But always he had the same steady stare, his brows bent, a difficult something apparently revolving in his troubled mind. Tom was always first in the counting-room of a morning; an old porter told Anthony that he was there very often as early as four o’clock.

"I always have a fire for Mr. Horn," said the man. "There 's no telling when he 'll come in and start his day. He 's an early bird, indeed, Mr. Horn is."

Anthony always bade the eccentric clerk the time of day; but Tom Horn never replied except with a questioning look that continued long after the young man had turned away. But one morning Anthony had occasion to hand him some bills for entry, and Tom surprised him by saying in his peculiarly hushed voice:

"Every one gives me figures. I see figures in my sleep."

"I don't doubt it," smiled Anthony.

"Each figure," said Tom Horn, "is made up of parts of other figures. Have you ever thought of that? Each leads into each; and so they make a circle. All circles are open, but they grow narrower. Sometimes they do it themselves; sometimes," and he nodded his head, his eyes fast upon Anthony's face, "we make them do it. There 's a law for it; it 's a law every one should study."

He again nodded his head, and remained looking after Anthony until the young man went out of the room. After that, when Anthony saw the strange eyes upon him,—and this was likely to occur at any hour of the day,—Tom Horn always nodded to him; and, oddly enough, Anthony fancied he detected in it something of approval—something, too, of encouragement.

But the days of the early winter dragged. There was none of the stir of vessels arriving and departing; none of the receiving of stores of new merchandise, none of the sudden bustlings and gossip of trade, and of money and exchange, that quickened things when the river was open. And, as each slow day went by, Anthony was weighted more and more with the conviction that no arresting sign would show itself in the midst of this commercial usualness; no sign *could* show itself. He watched minutely; he carefully balanced

what he saw against the indefinite things he suspected. But the result was emptiness. His mind met with polished perfection; his thoughts seemed to slip futilely about among the smooth ways of the business. Not one thing threw even the shadow of a promise across his path.

One early morning, as he shook the snow from his cloak and stamped it from his boots before the counting-room fire, Tom Horn was arranging his books upon the desk; and Anthony said, smilingly:

"You 'll be a very wise man one day, Tom. All this poring over books should lead to something."

"The books of the world, hold the world's knowledge," said Tom Horn. "And too few people give attention to them."

"That 's true," said Anthony, "most of us do not employ ourselves with as many of them as we should."

"Sometimes," said the clerk, "men try to draw their knowledge from the things in which they find themselves. In that way they limit their possibilities; for there are always other and wider things that might serve them better. One man can only hope to gain a little from the world as it turns, and that little is not of much service. But the accumulated findings of many men are ready written down. If you desire to make plain what 's keenest in your mind, go to books, study them diligently, study many of them; it will cost you but the price of so much lamp-oil, or so many candles, and the use of evening hours that you 'd otherwise throw away."

Anthony smiled.

"That 's excellent advice, Tom," he said. "And I 've no doubt I 'd do well to follow it."

The nights were long and cold and dark that winter; Anthony had no desire for social diversions, and he resisted the calls made upon him by his uncle, by Dr. King, by Whitaker; he desired to hold his mind to one thing, and every hour was given to its solution.

When he 'd shut the door of the counting-room of a night, leaving the trusty old porter to draw the fires and put out the lamps, he 'd trudge away to some tavern and have a lonely supper; then he 'd be off through the snow, for the weather held sharp, and there was little thaw, to his lodgings in Sassafras Street, where he 'd sit and brood by candle-light. Now and then he 'd allow himself the pleasure of a visit to Christopher Dent; and there, in the back room, he 'd smoke and listen to the little apothecary's pleased reminiscences of days that had long gone by. Once or twice during these visits Tom Horn also chanced in to warm his legs by Christopher's stove, before seeking the room he had in a court off Front Street. But on these occasions he 'd say nothing. Stamping the snow from his heels, he 'd hang his hat upon a peg and take his accustomed chair by the stove. And while Christopher talked and Anthony smoked and listened, Tom Horn would keep his eyes fixed upon the young man's face; what he saw there must have pleased him, for every now and then he 'd break forth into a series of approving nods, and he 'd rub his well-warmed worsted stockings smartly and with much confidence.

Of course, Anthony knew who Christopher's lodgers were; he 'd frowned when he first heard it, and when he reached his rooms that night his thoughts were far from pleasant. He could never quite forget the beautiful, spirited creature he 'd seen on the first morning after his arrival in the city; he could never quite forget the tremble in her rich voice as she appealed to him for aid. Also, and his brow grew dark at this, he could never forget the look she 'd given him that night at the Crooked Billet, that cold, stabbing look of scorn; and her head had turned away so that she might not see him, and she had walked into the conference of his enemies.

Each time after a visit at Christopher's he 'd go through this, and each time the train of thought would have its be-

ginning in some trifling thing. Once as he left the apothecary's shop he saw the windows of the second floor lighted up and the lamp glow shining down upon the snow. Once while he sat with his pipe in the apothecary's back room he heard a light foot on the stairs beyond the partition wall; the street door opened and closed. She had gone out! The streets were dark and lonely! He had half arisen to follow her; then he crushed himself back in his chair. At still another time he heard the faint tinkling of a stringed instrument, and the sweet murmur of a voice, singing a little French song. There was a peaceful something in this that shook Anthony; and as he sat in his room afterward his thoughts were very bitter, indeed.

He tried not to think of her; but when she gained a way into his mind his reflections always had one ending. Magruder! Had there ever been a more vicious and sordid taking off? Was there ever a more bloody or evil deed? The stains of it were deep on Tarrant and the big young man. And the girl? Was she not their friend? Had she not been in Water Street about the time the thing was done? Had not a rumor tied a woman to the crime? Every pulse in his body sent protests to his mind; but his mind was fixed, and he 'd rise up and tramp the floor.

One day Charles Stevens did not appear at the counting-room, being ill of a congestion. And in the evening Anthony took him some papers which it was thought necessary that he see, and found him wrapped comfortably in a rug before a fire in the library, reading a play-book. It was then that the words of Tom Horn about books came back to Anthony; and after he had discussed the matter of the papers with his uncle he approached one of the crowded bookcases.

"Sometimes I feel the need of a little variety in my thinking," he said. "Would you mind if I took one or two of these away with me?"

Charles, with the play-book lying upon his snugly wrapped knees, looked at him and smiled.

"Your grandfather never concerned himself with books," said he; "and you are such a replica of him that I took it for granted that your taste must be the same."

Anthony had opened the case and was rummaging among its contents, and Charles went on.

"Those rakehells of the Restoration will amuse you, if your taste runs to their kind," and he riffled the leaves of the play-book with kindly fingers. "You 'll find them there in the second shelf, next the fireplace. Or, if you 'd rather take a step back, the Elizabethans are just below, and they are a crew that 'll shake your soul, or your ribs, just as you 'd have them. Those Italian tale-tellers were shrewd workmen,—there in the pigskin, right under your hand,—but if you think you 'd care for romance nearer to this present day there is Defoe's narrative of the shipwrecked sailor, and also Fielding's chronicle of life as he 's seen it in his own England."

There was an array of pudgy little books, with stout leather backs and stained edges, upon a shelf quite low in the case. Anthony stooped, took one out, and opened it. The eyes of Charles sparkled.

"Voyages!" said he. "That one, I 'll wager, is Bartholomew Diaz; how often I 've sailed with him as a boy through the pages of that book, to the mouth of the Great Fish River. And there is fine old Vasco da Gama! Many a summer afternoon he and I have doubled the cape, put the complaining pilots in irons, and thrown their quadrants into the sea. And Columbus, and Cabot, and the Merchant Adventurers' Company. There 's a rank and file for you, if you want actual deeds and fine accomplishment; Hawkins, Drake, Davis, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and that never-beaten Yorkshireman, Martin Frobisher—"

"What are these?" asked Anthony.

At the bottom of the bookcase, stacked one upon the other, was an array of huge volumes, strong-looking and clean, and each with a number marked upon the leather back, in ink.

"More voyages," smiled Charles. "More expeditions, traffickings, and discoveries. But they are quite modern. In those a patient reader would find a complete record of the doings of Rufus Stevens' Sons, set down from the beginning."

Again Anthony thought of Tom Horn, but now in a new way. Again he saw him, with the successors of these same books before him on the tall desk, and heard him repeat, with an odd significance appearing in the words for the first time:

"The accumulated findings of many men are already written down. If you desire to make plain what's keenest in your mind, go to books, study them diligently, study many of them. It will cost you but the price of lamp-oil, or so many candles, and the use of some winter nights that you might otherwise throw away."

Anthony carried one of the big volumes to the table and opened it under the light. It was kept in a fine, flowing hand, in very black ink and with its rulings perfectly done.

"That's one of old Carberry's," said Charles. "A fine old fellow. He was before Tom Horn. Before him was Lucas, and before Lucas was Parker, a young Quaker who went into a business of his own. Mason had the books while your father was still with us, but there were two or three others between Mason and Parker."

Anthony gave him an odd look.

"You seem to have had a number of accountants of late years," said he.

Charles smiled, rather ruefully.

"Yes," said he, "that's true. I don't understand how it is. Our other work-people stay on with us for years. But,

among those who have kept our accounts, Tom Horn seems to be the only one who could or would remain."

Anthony's eyes went hungrily up and down the careful columns.

"I think," said he, "I 'd rather dip into these than into any other books you have." And then, as his uncle looked at him in surprise, he added, "If I 'm to come to the core of the firm's doings, I see no more direct way than this."

"Well, after all," said Charles amusedly, "I was not far wrong. You are your grandfather over again. He 'd have preferred the counting-house books to any romance or comedy ever penned."

And so when Anthony set out for his lodgings that night, he carried with him a number of the firm's books; they ran in regular order, and the dates on their backs were of the years immediately following his father's withdrawal from the business.

XVI

ANTHONY found a fine flavor in the old books of Rufus Stevens' Sons, a rich color, and an admirable reticence. Everything was set down with clerkly care, but for all that there was no humdrum routine, no dull insistence on profit and loss, no sordid grasping or squeezing of little things. The columns of figures, as Anthony studied them, did not mean so much the dollars paid out or taken in; they did not seem to deal with hard money, or price, with bargain or sale; when a line was struck under one of them, the result had none of the smell of the counting-room; rather it told of singular adventuring, of hazards, of stratagems in the midst of danger, of bleak days and plunging nights at sea.

He saw wide stretches of water: he saw a red sun and strange stars, and high-hulled ships with odd rigs and worked by dark-skinned men. He saw ports which grew masts as a forest grows trees; he saw boundless riches, precious stuffs, and ant-like populations; and he felt the spiritual depression that emanates from vast huddles of submissive people.

The names of the houses dealt with gave a tropic savor to many an entry; through a list of merchandise Anthony could fancy a caravan plodding; the glare of the sands made his eyes ache; he felt the hot wind on his face.

Batavia! Calcutta! Canton! Silent bells seemed to ring the names in his mind.

Batavia! Dutch Javanese, a place of stinks, of green canals, of hordes of slaves, of stolid Chinamen, a place of pepper, of

rattan, of sandalwood; of indigo, arrack and cloves. And its coffee! Its strong, brown, whip-like coffee that made the nerves jump, and started a fever in the blood. And Calcutta! held in one of the holy hands of the Ganges, standing away, many a laborious mile from the sea which made it; Calcutta, bright, opulent, hot, city of the Parsee merchant, of the Hindu, the Greek, the Armenian; place of silks, of wonderful shawls, of rice, ginger, and hides; of oils, ointments, and opium; city of crowding ships, of tangled flags, of many tongues; gateway of riches; sluice carrying off the toil of a patient people; filter through which went all that was good, and which gave back dregs alone.

Then Canton! with its staggering, shell-walled junks, its narrow streets, its sharp smells, its teeming, sweating, cheapened population, its grotesque vice. Grass cloth, damask, nankeen. Table ware! oh, excellent stuff! smooth, durable, shapely, with all the craft of attentive minds in its fabrication. And tea! The fortunes and the fragrance that were boxed up in those little chests! The swift ships that were sent for them: wide-winged ships that took them in, expectantly, departed hastily, and arrived breathlessly. And then such a gathering of merchants, such an uplifting of voices, such a scurrying and planning, such a laying out of money, such profiting and such satisfaction! Boxes of magic! Little chests of sorcery! marked with incantations and odorous of flowers.

A little wicket in Anthony's mind would be thrown open at some such place as this, and the sentinel, posted there by old Rufus, would put out his head.

"You are a true nephew to Charles," the sentinel would say. "You have a deal of the strain of blood that makes play of what should be serious man's work. You refused romances when Charles offered them. You said you'd rather read the books of the house. Very well, but how are you reading

them? Are they any more than tale books, taken in the spirit in which you sit down to them? It was your hope, was it not, to come upon some cunning contrivance, or artful bit of knavery? But it will take an open mind for that, and a seeing eye; and neither of those are had by one who reads into a book things that are not there."

"I was wrong," said Anthony. "I admit it. I was wrong."

"The winter is an excellent time for a search like this," spoke the sentinel; "and the winter is passing. In the spring other things will take your attention. So work diligently now; give your mind to it, and put aside all else. The things you have been thinking are those a man finds who reads by moonlight."

And then the wicket would close with an exasperated little snap; and Anthony would set himself squarely to his task, hunting, tracing, and examining. There was now no line of writing in any of the books that was so honest but it had to prove itself; there were no figures so obvious but they came under suspicion. As fast as he finished with the books he had, he brought more to his lodgings, and there was not a night but one of them was open on the table; his light burned steadily into the small hours while he read and made notes of those things which drew his attention.

"A coffee-house or a playhouse would be far better entertainment for him," said Charles, in speaking of the matter to Captain Weir. "But when a young man is as set in disposition as Anthony, one may as well give him his way."

Weir stood at a window with his back turned, and Charles did not see the ugly twist at his mouth or the narrowing of his cold eyes. But what he said was:

"I would venture he's nearer right than wrong. A solid knowledge may be had by doing what he's elected to do."

Whitaker smiled; also he shrugged in the new French way

when Griggs spoke of Anthony's labors. "Of course, every man to his own way of doing things," said he. "But my own method is to look forward, not backward; and I've found it does very well."

One night Anthony was drawing on his boots before the counting-room fire; Tom Horn was busy at his tall desk with his ledgers, a candle burning on either side of him. He suddenly paused in his labor and looked at Anthony.

"I have noticed in bits of your writing," said he, "that your pen is not a skilled one."

"No," confessed Anthony, readily. "I write very badly."

"Your capitals do not tower enough," said Tom Horn; "your round letters are too full in the belly, and your loops are squat." He peered at Anthony over the great ledger, the candle on either side toning out the transparent quality of his skin but adding to the worn expression; the shadows made the deep-set eyes seem deeper, the hope in them more despairing. "To give smoothness to your hand," said he, "you should study some one who took pride in such things." He nodded, his gaze holding to the young man's face. "Back before my day with the firm's books, there was a man of the name of Lucas who wrote a very useful hand. And Carberry, who came after him, also had a well-ordered pen. You would do well to give attention to both; but, of the two, Lucas would give you most for your effort."

"I have not yet come to Lucas's period in the books," said Anthony; "nor yet Carberry's. But when I do I'll remember what you say."

The winter drew on, a series of bitter nights and gray, wind-driven days; the report came that the bay was a mass of great floes, and that sledges heavily burdened were venturing a mile or more from shore on either side. The roads were filled with hard-packed snow; wheeled vehicles had not been seen for weeks.

Then one evening there walked into the counting-room of Rufus Stevens' Sons one Corkery, mate of the firm's ship *General Stark*, and, in a brief seaman-like way, told how the vessel was ice-bound at New Castle and from all appearances would remain so until the coming of spring.

This news caused Anthony to walk the floor; for the *Stark* was laden with hides, drugs, and sugar, and the market for these things was brisk. The ship should never have ventured into the bay. It seemed that Captain Small had managed her indifferently.

"Captain Small is ill of a lung fever," said Corkery. "He has n't set foot on deck since we left Hatteras."

"As mate," said Anthony, "you took his place. When you saw the floes, you should have headed the vessel for New York. With the merchandise landed there we'd have contrived a way to deal with it."

Corkery was a blunt man, with no affectation of speech.

"With a master tumbling about on his bed, and praying to God, and raving about things that must have passed in his boyhood, I was glad to arrive, as near as I could, at the place called for in the ship's papers," said he. "You here in the counting-room can talk of markets easily enough, for you are always where you can watch them; also, you can talk offhand of changing a ship's destination, for you've no one to answer to if you've guessed wrong."

Anthony smiled and nodded, for he knew the mate spoke truth.

"I hope all that could be done for Captain Small has been done," said he.

"He is ashore at New Castle, at the house of a doctor in the place, and is being well seen to," said Corkery.

"That is good," said Charles. "And, as to the ship, I suppose all we can do now is see that she's well watched to keep her from thieves, and from damage by the ice."

“That is all. The second mate is aboard, and the crew is one to be depended on. I’ll go back myself in a day or two.”

But Anthony frowned; and after Corkery had gone he continued to pace the floor.

“Ah, well,” said Whitaker, after a time, approaching him, “it does no good to fidget. It’s the hard season, and nothing else was to be expected. We can only wait until the ice is out, and the vessel can come comfortably up to her dock.”

“But while excellent cargo is within hands’ reach are we to sit here twiddling our thumbs?”

“What else can we do?” asked Whitaker cheerily. “When a ship is lodged in the river’s gullet as this one seems to be, and there’s a month or more of bad weather still to come, why fret and get in a state of mind?”

But this submissive state did not appeal to Anthony; he resented the easy air of the counting-room under defeat; so he thought hard about the matter during the day, and for most of the night; and the next morning found him in the public room of a tavern on Second Street where he heard Corkery was lodged. The mate sat before the tavern fire chipping bits of tobacco from a dark cake, with which to charge his pipe, and greeted Anthony with a nod; the young man drew a stool up to the fire and sat warming his hands at the blaze.

“They tell me,” said Anthony, “that you are of this port and know the river and bay very well.”

“Why,” said Corkery, as he carefully chipped away at the tobacco, “I was a boy aboard a sloop that sailed between here and Bristol, carrying bricks; then I shipped on the New Castle packets. Yes, I can claim to know the river and bay quite well.”

“How did you come up to the city?” asked Anthony.

“By sledge,” replied the mate.

"In what state are the roads?"

"Filled with snow, but packed hard. The sledge I came up on carried a good weight of freight as well."

"Are there many sledges in the neighborhood of New Castle, and could one engage the use of them?"

"The farmers and traders could muster a deal of them," said Corkery, "and, I suppose, would put them out for hire with little dispute."

Anthony smiled at the fire; and then he began questioning the man about the position of the ship, and the condition of the ice about her. The replies being satisfactory, the young man went into the bar and spoke to the landlord.

"I want a span of good-stepping horses," he said. "Also I want a sleigh and a driver who knows the roads as far south as New Castle."

The landlord was a Scot, a hard-featured, scrubby man with the manner of one whom the world had failed to convince.

"There 's many a team," said he, "and like enough there 's many a sleigh. And I 've spoken to many a man who knows the very roads you have in mind. But where are they now? is the question, and could they be engaged if found?" He frowned and looked doubtful. "But you might try Churchman in Cobbler's Place," said he.

Churchman was located; he was the exact opposite of the Scot; he took life as a pleasant experience, and seemed to have the fullest confidence in everything.

"I have just the span you want, and exactly the sleigh," said he. "But the driver is another matter. Could n't you drive yourself? Your way is as plain as a-b-c."

Anthony had traveled the roads with Christopher Dent as far as the Delaware line, on more occasions than one, and he felt sure that he 'd manage to keep to the way. So he gave his orders and went back to the counting-room. Charles had

not yet arrived, for it was still a fairly early hour. However, Captain Weir was there; he stood with his back to the fire, his hands behind him, and greeted Anthony pleasantly.

"You are still going on with the books, I suppose," said he, after a space.

"Yes," said Anthony.

"Mind you don't overdo it; too much candle-light is a bad thing. But with all this attention you must be making progress."

"Yes," said the young man, "things are becoming plainer to me, I think." He took up a poker and shoved a billet, which was throwing a thin spiral of smoke into the room, back into the fireplace. "Though, I must admit, there are some I don't understand."

"To be sure," said Weir. "That is to be expected. But, perhaps, I could help you?"

But Anthony shook his head.

"Not yet," said he. "For I have n't made up my mind about the matters, except to think them curious, and to note that they stand out singularly."

"Books are kept for a firm's information," said Weir; "but, speaking for myself, I get little out of them. After a little they are a kind of a maze, and often mislead me."

"So far, I can't complain of that. But, as I've said, I've come upon an odd flavor here and there in the ledgers; it's made me curious, and I hope to come upon the reason for the oddness further on."

Here Charles came in, cheery and rosy from the nip of the cold.

"I have made arrangements to go to New Castle to-day," said Anthony.

Charles threw his cloak to a porter, and looked at his nephew in surprise.

"Why?" he asked.

"To look at the roads, to get the position of the ship, and study the chances of getting the cargo up to the city."

Charles laughed good-humoredly.

"Well, thank God, you 've got an active mind," said he. "But here 's a thing, I 'm afraid, that 's bigger than you think for."

"That can't be told until the conditions are known to a certainty," said Anthony. "If the roads are as I have been assured they are, and sledges are to be had, I can bring the important details of the *Stark's* cargo into the warehouse in ten days' time."

Charles looked at him for a moment, and then turned to Weir.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Weir. "I 've never heard of it being done under these conditions; but, then," and he nodded his head, his eye fixed thoughtfully upon Anthony, "we have here a young man who has led trains through the wilderness, and across the deserts. So, under any human circumstances, from New Castle to the city should be no impossible task."

"Well," said Charles to Anthony, "if you have the mind to try the thing, there it is for you."

An hour later, while the horses were being put to the sleigh in Cobbler's Place, Anthony told Churchman what he had in mind. The optimist rose freshly to the idea, his eyes snapping.

"The only thing against you is a sudden change in the weather great enough to soften the roads," said he. Then he scanned the patch of sky that could be seen between the walls of the court and seemed to taste of the quality of the wind. "And there 's not much chance of that," said he. "This cold wind will keep things hard as iron for weeks to come."

Anthony settled the thick, warm robes about him and was off along Second Street; and, finally below the lower ferry, he struck into the road that ran along the river. It was afternoon when he drew up in Chester for a snack of food, some warming drink, and to have the horses seen to. He crossed the state line in that gray hour just before night-fall; the wind from the river, away to the left, was bleak and heavy; the runners whined as they slid over the frozen snow; Anthony's knees were stiff, and despite the generous wrappings he began to feel his blood chill. He saw a man cutting wood in a patch of timber not far from the road, and drove toward him.

"How many miles is it to the nearest tavern where a bed can be had for the night?"

The ax bit deeply into the log and was allowed to stay so, while the man beat his blue hands together and answered:

"There 's a village about five miles along the way you 're going. But the inn is a rough place, and small; and the food is not over-good."

"Years ago," said Anthony, "when I knew something of the roads further to the north, I 'd hear of a tavern called "the Brig" which I understood was somewhere hereabouts."

The man's face wore a curious expression as he looked at Anthony. Then he said:

"It 's open still, and is clean, and has excellent, good beds. There 's cookery to be had in that place the like of which you seldom come upon; and as for its spirits and malt liquors, well, sir, they are rare, indeed!"

The place where Anthony had stopped was on the shoulder of a hill; night was now lowering over the desolate winter landscape with its bare fields, stunted trees, and ice-filled marsh. The wood-cutter pointed in the direction of the river.

"Do you see that road winding along there?" asked he. "And there, in a hollow near it, a clump of cedars?"

"I do," said Anthony. "And I also see something rising up from among the trees like the mast of a ship."

"It is one," said the man, "and with a topmast and rigging all complete, just as it would be if it were stepped in a vessel instead of the dooryard of the Brig Tavern."

Anthony looked at the mast for a moment, then turned his eyes upon the man.

"When I inquired about an inn," said he, "you spoke of an indifferent one a long way off, but made no mention of this excellent one so close at hand."

The wood-cutter grasped the haft of his ax and plucked its blade out of the log.

"The Brig is so off the road," said he, "I thought you 'd not care to go there."

There was a look in the man's face that gave a different story; but Anthony did not stay to go further into the matter; he thanked him, turned his horses back to the road, and proceeded on. In a little while he came to the place where the winding road crossed the main one; taking to this he journeyed on toward the tavern. The winter twilight had grown thicker; and ahead in the hollow where the cedars grew, night had already thrown itself down. There was a dull glow from the inn; it served to light the way through the trees, and as Anthony's sleigh drew up a man came out of a barn with a lantern.

"What, Mr. Blake," said the man, "are you back so soon?"

"I am not Mr. Blake," said Anthony, as he threw aside the robes and got out. "What encouragement is there here for a traveler who has the mind to stay overnight?"

The man held the lantern up so that its lighted candle might bring out Anthony's face.

"I was sure you were Mr. Blake," said he. "Your horses

feet pattered on the road just as his do, and you came in at the gate in the same free fashion."

"As I so resemble friend Blake in those ways," said Anthony, "I wonder is he like me in being hungry and in need of a fire and a bed."

"I have no doubt but you can have both if you inquire within," said the man. "And if you desire I'll rub and feed and bed your horses."

Anthony turned the animals over to him, and walked up the paved way to the door of the tavern. There were some massive hewn steps leading up to the door, and a hood projected over it to keep out the wash of the weather. Anthony went through the wide hall and into a room at one side. Two men sat by a fire playing drafts, and a woman stood by the table watching them. One of the men was a furtive, dry-looking person with a patch over one eye; the other was Monsieur Lafargue. And she who stood looking on was his daughter.

XVII

AS Anthony stood in the doorway, unnoticed by those in the room, a man came down the passage. It was the landlord, a massive man, with a glowing vitality and a quick eye.

"Pardon," said he, "I did not know monsieur had arrived. I was expecting no one, for the night is shutting down."

Anthony followed him along the passage and into another room; this was larger than the first, but it was snug enough, there being a good fire blazing, and the curtains being drawn to keep out the bleak look of the falling night.

Anthony warmed himself by the fire and examined the host, who was without doubt a Frenchman—a huge, swift man who at once gained the attention.

"I had hoped to reach Wilmington before night overtook me," said Anthony. "But I could not do it; and so I recalled this place."

A quick, bright interest was in the landlord's eye.

"Ah," said he, "monsieur has been here before?"

"No," said Anthony.

"So few come to us from the roads," said the man. "We are out of the track, you see. Our guests are from the river: masters and mates and supercargoes of vessels working up to the city, or bound out to sea, who are at anchor awaiting orders, or repairs, or one of many other things. It was for them, monsieur, that the inn was originally built."

"You have not much patronage when the ice is in the river, I suppose?"

“Ah! then it is a lean time, indeed,” complained the host.
“There is nothing.”

“And yet,” continued Anthony, “as I think I’ve noticed, you do not altogether lack patronage.”

“A few people who will be gone as soon as they have eaten and rested,” said the Frenchman briefly. And then, “Will monsieur remain for the night?”

Anthony replied that he would; also that he was hungry and looked forward to a good supper; and then, with many assurances, the landlord left him. The young man stood before the fire for a time, his eyes fixed on the floor, frowning, his hands clasped behind him. There was a moaning of the winter wind among the high, pointed roofs of the Brig; and the mast planted in the dooryard sung keenly.

He tried to think what Lafargue and his daughter were doing in so unexpected a place. In pleasanter weather it might be laid to the desire of strangers to journey about, but the bare fields and cold roads beckoned no one on days like these. For a space he wondered at their presence; then, easily, so easily that he was not aware of it, his mind slipped into the thought that mademoiselle was beautiful. He’d always known it, yet he’d never felt it so forcefully as he did at the moment he’d seen her at the table near her father, amusedly watching his interest in the draft-board. Her tallness was marked, and—

“What the devil of it?” said Anthony. “She could be as tall and slim as a spire, and yet it would mean nothing to me.”

Again he pinned his mind to a more practical thing. Rufus Stevens’ Sons had a rich ship fast in the ice not many miles below; and Rufus Stevens’ Sons had enemies. Among those enemies—and the young man would have laid his head on the block in support of this—was Tarrant. And Tarrant was a friend to Lafargue, and apparently to Lafargue’s

daughter. Anthony fixed his eye on the long flare of a candle, and stood frowning at it. He had always thought her hair quite dark; but now he knew it was not. There was a great deal of copper in it, a deep, rich copper that had shone warmly in the candle-light. He wondered what that something was that candle-light had—it seemed to bring out truth so. That's why they burned them on altars, perhaps, or that's why their lighting, spoken of in certain books, was always the signal for the appearance of pixies and fairies. He stood for a long time so.

Then he took his eyes from the candle and cursed himself for a fool! The gentle shape against the lovely glow was gone; in its place was the dirty hull of the *General Stark*, fast in the grip of the river; and filling the remainder of Anthony's world were the eyes of Tarrant—cold, malicious eyes, and greedy, too, and fixed upon the helpless vessel.

A man came into the room and smirked at Anthony.

"How do you do, sir?" said he.

It was the man with the patch over his eye, and he approached the fire, where he warmed his large-boned hands and and basked in the heat with many little gasps and whistlings of pleasure.

"A bitter night," said he. "A bitter, raw night. It's very fortunate that one has a place like this to depend upon when affairs draw one so far from the city."

"It is so," said Anthony.

"A fine, generous place," said the man appreciatively. "Good food and drink, clean beds. Comfortable surroundings. A traveler should give thanks for gifts as good as these."

"Especially as the place is so unexpected," said Anthony.

Again the man smirked. He rubbed his hands together over the fire; there was something furtive in the way he did

this, as though he were filching the warmth, and getting pleasure out of the fact that no one noticed it.

"The inn is curiously located," said he. "Very curiously. I've spoken of it more than once. But, then, shipmen are a fine-hearted lot, and when they come up from the sea they want comfort ashore. And who will blame them?"

"Not I," said Anthony.

There was a little pause; then the man spoke again.

"You are connected with shipping, I'd say."

"Yes."

The man nodded.

"There is something of the manner of the seaman about you," said he. "And yet," with another smirk, "I seem to see the merchant, too."

"You have an excellent eye," said Anthony.

"I wonder," said the man, "if I've ever come upon you before. I have a passing acquaintance with most of the traders, ship-owners, and traffickers in the port, and yet I can't recall you."

"I have been in the North only a short time," said Anthony. "I'm of Rufus Stevens' Sons."

The man sucked in his lips, and left off warming his hands; his one good eye searched Anthony's face with startled sharpness.

"A good house," he said finally. "An excellent house. You are perhaps," and he said this with care, "that nephew to Charles of whom I have heard."

"I am his only nephew," said Anthony.

"There are those who speak of Charles as erratic," observed the man with the one eye. "But that is an error. He is different from most of his occupation, but difference signifies nothing to a man's discredit. He is an unusual and desirable person. I congratulate you in him."

Anthony nodded. He wished the man would take himself off, for the furtive manner and crafty eye did not please him.

"It is too bad your ship is in so unfortunate a situation in the river," said the man. "Some one has told me that she carries cargo of immediate value."

"Yes," said Anthony.

"But what can be done?" said the man. He awaited an answer; but none came, and he proceeded. "Providence decrees these things, and so it is scarcely proper for us to object."

Anthony was one who did not readily put the blame of things on Providence, and he held his tongue with difficulty. However, he saw the one-eyed man shrewdly awaiting an observation from him, and that made silence easier. The stranger talked of ships, cargoes, weather, and misadventures, but Anthony replied only briefly; then the landlord came in, and laid the cloth for the young man's supper. Anthony sat down, and the one-eyed man, with a parting smirk, left the room. The supper was hot and plentiful and good; the host served him himself with great attention. When he had finished, Anthony sat and smoked a Spanish cigar by the fire, listening to the wind whining among the roofs of the tavern and quite at his ease. Now and then the tall, graceful figure in the candle-light would venture to the edge of his thoughts, but he drove it back with resolution.

A clock from somewhere in the place struck nine; Anthony arose and went to see to his horses. He found them well provided for, in warm stalls, watered and fed, and bedded thickly in fresh straw.

"A good team," said the hostler, who held the lantern so that Anthony might see that all was well. "Well set upon their feet, and with fine barrels and strong legs. I like sor-

rels; they are not as common as some, and they have plenty of courage."

"I suppose," said Anthony, "you have handled horses for a long time."

"Yes," said the man, "for many years, indeed. I've been employed at a half-score inns in my time—inns that have stood on much-traveled roads, and have taken in all who came their way."

"The Brig must be a quiet place after those," said Anthony.

The man smoothed his jaws with a nervous hand.

"I like a place to be quiet," said he. "There's few come by this track, for it leads only to the marsh and the river. Yes, it's quiet here; and I am away from all urging."

Anthony looked curiously at the man; the rays of the lantern were in his face, and his deep-set eyes showed the habit of fear.

"The main road is a good piece away," said he. "I'm glad of that, for I'm afraid of roads. There are many strange things that happen on them. If you listen, in quiet weather," said he, and pointed in the direction of the highway, "you can hear that one speak. Of a night in the summer-time I lie awake and listen to it whispering in its sleep as though it were dreaming. The dreams of roads must be strange ones," said the man. "There are times when they must be monstrous. And I keep from them as much as I may."

"It is a queer thing to be afraid of a road," said Anthony.

"You'd not say that if you'd had as much to do with them as I," said the man. "I know what they are. Much danger is to be met on roads; many an honest man has lost

his life upon them; and many a foul thing creeps along their lengths."

"I've traveled a deal," said Anthony, "and I've met with no harm."

The man shook his head.

"Do not trust them," he said. "More than any other time, do not trust them of a night. There is more goes on of a night on the road than is thought."

"If a man does not come to know the highways by traveling them, how is he to do it?" asked Anthony.

"To know a road, even in a small way," said the man, "you must live by the side of it a very long time. You must lie down by it in the darkness; you must listen for its mutterings, and to the pulse that beats always in it; you must give your mind to the messages it brings of happenings a long way off. Yes, roads are strange, and for all their talk you never get the full truth of their doings. That's why I am afraid of them. When travel is high, and they are flowing along, they try to take one with them. Did you know that? You can feel them reaching out for you and grasping at you. A quiet place is best; and this place is very quiet. There is nothing goes by this door that might take one up and away. Yes, it's very quiet here; there is nothing to be afraid of."

Anthony went back to the fire, and sat for an hour or more considering what he'd better do next day; then he called the landlord, and a porter was given a candle and told to show him to his room. This was at the side of the house facing the river; and when the porter had gone Anthony blew out the candle, pulled back the window-curtains, and stood looking out. The wind was blowing in gusts, and had a thin, bitter sound; clouds were driving along the sky; the stars were small and cold and far away. Across the dismal wrack of

the winter marsh he saw the ice-choked river, running like a gray streak across the darkness. He watched this for some time; then he drew the curtains once more, relighted the candle, opened his roll of belongings, and prepared for bed.

It was a solid, honest-looking room: the bed had tall posts and a tick swollen with feathers; the sheets were white and smelled sweet as he stretched himself between them. There was not a sound but the wind and the shaking of the window-frames. All the people of the countryside must be indoors, he thought, to avoid the cold. And they showed good sense in that. There was nothing so disagreeable as a bleak night, afloat or ashore; and there was nothing quite so comfortable as a snug bed. He had nothing to say against good company, mind you, or a cheery fire and some hot drink, and tales of adventuring here and there. Many a bad night might be turned to pleasant account that way. It was a fine, good-humored, and companionable way. But, after all, a good bed—long enough, so that one might stretch out in it—was best; you could lie and think if you had the mind, or you could doze off luxuriously with nothing to prevent you.

Anthony dozed off; and then he slept. And finally he awoke. He did not know how much time had passed; but he did know that his room door was partly open, and that some one stood there looking in. The part-light glinted coldly upon the long barrel of a pistol; a man held the weapon in both hands, and it was pointed toward the bed; one eye of the man glanced sharply along its length, and the other was covered by a patch.

Then there were quick feet in the passage; there was a voice,—a woman's voice,—angry, but whispering, a scuffling, a curse! Then the door closed and a key shot to the bolt. Anthony leaped out of bed; he opened the door with his own key, and looked out. The passage was lighted grayly by a

window at one end; it was empty and silent. For an instant it was in his mind to believe he had been dreaming; but there upon the floor, the morning light cold upon its barrel, lay a holster pistol, its hammer drawn back at full cock.

XVIII

AS he stood looking at the pistol lying on the floor of the passage, a rage grew in Anthony's breast; he returned to his room and drew on his clothes; into the passage he went once more, took up the pistol, and looked to its loading and priming at the window. Then, lowering the hammer and holding to the barrel, he thumped upon the door nearest him with the butt.

"Landlord! Everybody! Turn out! My life has been put in danger in this damned house! Landlord!"

From door to door, down the passage, he went; the pistol butt fell noisily upon each, and at each he swore bitter oaths.

"Landlord! Out with you! By God, there's not a man in all this place but must answer to me!"

There were hurried sounds behind the closed doors; a servant of the inn came toiling up the stairs.

"Sir," said he. "You'll have the house aroused. What is the matter?"

"Get me the landlord," directed Anthony. "Tell him not to delay. I have a sharp word or two for that good man."

"The landlord is still abed," said the servant.

Anthony took him by the scruff of the neck and held his face against the glass of the window.

"Who do you see in the yard?" demanded he.

It was the landlord himself, and hastily leading out a team of swift-looking horses, attached to a sleigh. At the same time a man was seen to cross the yard from the direction of the tavern door; it was the man with the patch over one eye, and he took the reins and stepped into the sleigh.

Anthony tore at the window to open it, but it was fast; with the pistol butt he smashed the glass, and while it was still crashing and jingling he shouted.

"Stop! I'd like a moment with you, sir!"

The man in the sleigh gave one upward look, then wheeled his horses to face the road. Anthony leveled the pistol and fired; the heavy ball smashed through the back of the sleigh; there were cries from all parts of the inn; then, seizing the remainder of his belongings, Anthony ran down the stairs.

At the outer door he met the landlord, thick-set, swift, with bright dangerous eyes; and the man held out a hand to stop him.

"Monsieur takes many liberties," said the landlord. "He smashes my windows, and fires at my guests."

Anthony saw the hostler with whom he had spoken the night before standing at the door of the barn.

"My horses," said he, "and let me have them quickly."

"First," said the landlord, and the hand was still held out, "we shall speak a few words."

"So we shall," said Anthony, as he looked at him from under frowning brows. "And they shall be very few." He struck aside the man's hand and gripped him by the shoulder. "What manner of place do you keep here, where your crony tries to murder a traveler in his bed, and you lend your ready help to have him escape?"

The Frenchman, with a heave of his powerful body, pulled himself free; there was a savage glint in his eye and a purposeful set to his jaws. He leaped at Anthony like an ape, and at once had him cleverly about the body.

"Now, my loud-crowing young gentleman, I'll show you something," said he.

There were some of the tavern's people who had gathered by this; heads were seen at windows, and each face wore a grin of derision for Anthony. Softly, creepingly, the cun-

ning grip shifted and improved itself. From the ease of the things doing, the young man knew he was in the hands of a master of wrestling; he saw the bulging of the big thews under the Frenchman's clothes, and the swelling of his thick neck.

"In another two minutes," said a voice, "he 'll not have enough breath in his body to whisper with. And a little space ago he was talking loud enough."

Anthony thought he knew this voice; he cocked an eye over the shoulder of the straining Frenchman in its direction and saw the big young man of the New York packet.

"Hah!" said Anthony, "it was half in my mind that you 'd be here, my friend." The hostler, whom he had ordered to make ready his sleigh, stood in the barn-door, the harness in his hands, his mouth open. "Don't waste my time, good friend," Anthony called to him. "Get the horses to the sleigh; for after I 've finished here I 'll want to take to the road in the wake of the person who just left."

The Frenchman was proceeding in a methodical, workmanlike manner; his thick arms were contracting steadily about Anthony's body; under their pressure the young man felt his ribs bending, his vitals crushed, and his breath grow short. And all the time the Frenchman growled like a surly dog.

"We shall see in a moment," he wheezed. "We shall see how you 'll talk when I 've done with you, my high-stepper!"

But Anthony had a plan in his mind, and his thoughts were now on it alone. He threw his weight forward, and the Frenchman gave back; the tavern yard was thick with snow, frozen over in a rough crust; at one place where much water had been thrown there was a smooth ice, and it was upon this that the young man forced the wrestler. To put forward the effort needed in his bone-crushing the man needed good

footing; and here he had none. Once upon the glassy spot he began to slip, and his grip grew slack. Anthony's right knee instantly came up, short, sharp, vicious; once, twice, thrice it struck the Frenchman in the stomach, and he went a deathly green. Anthony tore himself from the weakened grip, and lashed out with his fist; it struck the wrestler on the side of the head, and he fell and lay without motion.

"My sleigh in two minutes," said Anthony as he glanced toward the barn; then he stepped to where the onlookers were grouped, and his lowering eyes marked each one. They were mostly young, or in the prime of life, sailormen, or having the look of mercantile pursuits, hardy of body, keen of eye, and of ready manner.

"My life," said Anthony, "has been put in danger in this place, and until I have good and sufficient proof to the contrary I shall believe that each man of you had a knowledge of it." He lifted his gaze to the windows, some of which had been thrown up despite the bitter weather. "I don't know why this is," said he to them, "but," and with his chin out he defied them, "it would give me a great deal of pleasure to go into the matter with you."

"It's an honest inn," said the big young man, as he smiled good-humoredly at Anthony. "And filled with honest people. Your romantic disposition and instinct for situations, if you'll let me say so, sir, are leading you astray."

"I waken in the early morning," said Anthony, "and see a man with whom I talked the night before holding a pistol pointed at me. A few minutes later I see him about to drive off, assisted by the landlord. I attempt to follow; the landlord tries to prevent me, and you all stand about and agree that he's in the right." Out of the tail of his eye he saw his horses being put into the sleigh; and he went on: "I think I could remain here to good advantage for an hour or two,"

said he, "but the gentleman who just now took to the road has the first claim to my attention." He moved with a long stride toward the sleigh, and helped the hostler with the traces and reins; also he looked sharply to the buckles; and while doing so he continued, "However, I shall keep this place in mind, and the questions I have to ask I will ask some of you when we meet again."

"You think, then, there will be another meeting," laughed the big young man.

"At any rate," said Anthony, "you and I shall meet." He got into the sleigh, wrapped the robes about him, and took up the reins. "So give thought to it; I've had you in mind for some time, and want no advantage over you."

And then he spoke to the horses; in a moment they were out of the inn yard, and Anthony was facing toward New Castle in the track of the man with the patch over his eye.

XIX

ANTHONY had a feeling that the one-eyed man had taken the road toward Wilmington; so he put the sorrels to their best, and the miles spun behind them. The man ahead had no such horses, and Anthony felt he 'd bring up with him before the next few hours went by. His first halt was at a decent-looking tavern on the verge of Wilmington. While giving his horses time to blow, he ate a little food and talked with the landlord.

"It's early for travel at this time of year," said he, as he munched the boiled beef and the good white bread. "I suppose I'm the first of the morning."

"Oh, no," said the host, an honest, stout man, who looked as though his judgment of ale was of the best; "there have been several passed before you."

"None you knew, however," said Anthony.

"I knew them all," said the stout tavern-keeper. "There was old Ned Dance with his bags of meal from the miller's, and Simon, the cabinet-maker's man, from Chadd's Ford; and then there was the master of the French ship—"

"What French ship?" asked Anthony.

"She that lies a few miles below; an armed ship she is, too, perhaps a letter-of-marque, but with only a few men aboard of her."

"What appearing man is her master," asked Anthony with interest.

"Not a Frenchman, though you 'd expect him to be. He's American, right enough, and one that I'm not fond of because of a kind of slithering laugh he's got. And he wears a patch over one of his eyes."

Anthony smiled and seemed to enjoy the bread and beef much more than before.

"So that 's who my gentleman is!" he said to himself. "And with an ice-locked ship." Then he said aloud, "I suppose he was on his way to his vessel when he went by?"

"Where else?" asked the host. "He never goes further south than that; and no further north than the Brig Tavern, which is off the road, some miles from here."

"I have heard that is an excellent place of entertainment," said Anthony.

"It was for many years," said the host, with a nod of the head, "and, as far as food and drink and such-like go, is so still. But," and here the nod turned to a shake, "in other ways it seems different now. I 've heard ill reports of it."

"It 's a place for shipmen to stop, I 've been told," said Anthony. "If that is so, there cannot be a great deal wrong with it."

"There are shipmen and shipmen," said the stout tavern-keeper. "Some are honest and give their minds to bringing their ships home, all snug and trim, and carrying profitable merchandise; others again have never sailed an honest voyage and never stowed an item of cargo that was properly come by."

"Pirates," smiled Anthony. "But there are none such in these waters."

"Where there is gain to be had there will your villains gather," said the host. "There is a rich city up the river, and in that city there are many crafty rascals."

"I 'll not deny that," said Anthony. "But cunning roguery and open plunder are different things; many a man would venture one who would fear the other."

"Things have altered since my grandfather's day," said the host. "Then there was Kyd and Teach and Avery, sailing into the bay when ever it pleased them, trafficking with the

merchants, being friends of governors, having in their ships' companies those who were members of state assemblies, walking the streets of towns, with their heads up brazenly, and known to every man and woman who met them. To-day, of course, things are different," added the man. "They are quite different."

"And better?" said Anthony, and there was an expectant look in his eye.

"As to that I 'll not say," answered the tavern-keeper. "For I 'm not sure. We have our own officials now, if that 's any gain for us. But men are the same as they 've always been; they crave money still and will use dark practices and outlawed ways to get it. There 's many a fine ship that passes out beyond these capes that 's never heard of again."

"Storms blow at sea as they 've always done," said Anthony.

"True; and the knowledge of that is what keeps people's minds from other things; they place all to the discredit of wind and wave. But, sir, there are ships still at sea that can't show papers; even now there are lonely headlands and reefs and sandspits that could harbor bands of ruffians. And more than that: there are merchants and traders and agents—the rascals of whom I just now spoke—who can market loot and communicate intelligence."

"Is it your thought," asked Anthony, "that the Brig Tavern is being used as a means of furthering some such traffic as this?"

The man shook his head.

"I could not go before the authorities and so swear," said he. "But odd things are said of the place; it seems much used just now by those who are forwardest with their talk of arming American ships and sending them out under the French flag against the British."

"I 've heard whispers of that purpose, but nothing to give attention to," said Anthony.

"This war in Europe will give excuse to many a rascally thing in our waters before we are done with it," warned the landlord. "Mark you that."

Anthony finished his bread and beef, and drank the mug of ale which had been brought to him; and, after some further talk with the landlord, he paid his score, took to his sleigh once more, and in the course of some few hours was in New Castle. He gave no more thought to the man with the patch over his eye; he now knew where to find him and would attend to him later on. The *General Stark* was pointed out to him as she lay ice-locked about a hundred or more yards from the shore; and he lost no time in getting aboard of her. He talked with the second mate and spent that night in the ship. Next day he went briskly to work collecting sledges for the work in hand; messengers ran roads, notices were posted at stores and taverns, and by the third morning upward of a hundred stout teams were drawn up on the river-bank, ready to carry through the project. The hatches were off the *General Stark*, and the merchandise was hoisted cheerily out of her; spans of horses did the hauling at the tackle; the sledges were brought to the ship-side and received the cargo as it was swung out of the hold. By night all the valuable parts of the vessel's cargo were transferred; and by dawn next day the caravan, one sledge behind the other, started up the river road. Corkery had rejoined the ship by this; and he stood on deck, his elbows on the rails, watching the long file of laden vehicles as they plodded onward.

"That is the kind of enterprise this river knows little of," said he. "You 'll make a stir when that merchandise gets to the market, Mr. Stevens; they 'll open their eyes."

The gray of early morning was upon the leaden river, with

its ridges of dirty snow and its dispirited, helpless ships. Anthony's eyes were fixed upon a schooner about a mile away, from the galley of which smoke was arising.

"That, I think, is a French armed vessel of which I have heard," said he.

"She is French, and she is armed," answered Corkery.

"I have a trifle of business aboard of her," said Anthony.

The deck was littered with broken bits of timber, thrown down in the hurried work of hoisting the cargo; and from this Anthony selected a stout cudgel. He threw it over the ship's side; then, without another word to Corkery, he slid down a rope, put the cudgel under his arm, and, with hands thrust deeply into his pockets, set off across the ice to the other ship.

As he reached its side a voice called in French.

"Well, my early morning friend, what is your wish?"

Anthony looked up. A small man, dark of skin, and in a red mob-cap, leaned over the rail amidships and eyed him with disapproval.

"To come aboard," said Anthony.

There were some steps let down from the schooner's side, and he quietly climbed them. The small man met him at the rail and put out a protesting hand.

"It is forbidden!" said he. "This is the French republican ship *Le Mousquet*, and not a merchantman."

Anthony put the hand aside.

"I desire to see the captain," he said.

"The citizen captain is at breakfast in his cabin," said the small man. "He will see no one."

But Anthony was knocking at the cabin-door in another moment.

"Enter," said a voice. Anthony went in, and there he found the man with the patch over his eye engaged in pour-

ing chocolate from a pot into a silver cup. Surprised, the man put down the pot; then he smirked at Anthony, collected enough, and said:

"Ah! so it is you! I have heard news of you and your ship. You are a man of purpose, sir. Allow me to congratulate you."

"Citizen," said the small man, putting his head in at the cabin, "it was against my directions that you are intruded upon."

"It is no matter," said the captain. "The gentleman will be going in another moment." He took up the silver cup and sipped the chocolate. "To what, sir, do I owe this visit?"

Anthony kicked aside the little table which sat before the one-eyed man, and the things it held crashed to the floor. Alertly the small man seized him.

"My friend," said Anthony tolerantly. "I have no business with you, and less desire to do you harm. So go outside like a decent fellow."

He threw the little man from the cabin, and shut and locked the door; and as he turned about he saw the schooner's master taking a pistol from the cupboard. The pistol exploded as the cudgel struck it; and the bullet tore through the housing. Then Anthony gathered the man's neck-cloth in his grip and beat him until his knees grew limp and the blood ran from him; then he dropped him upon the floor and went upon the deck. The small man was there; and with him were the black ship's cook and a boy who had round, surprised eyes and held a cutlass as probably one had never been held before. Anthony smiled as he looked at them.

"Citizens of the republican ship *Le Mousquet*," said he, "I have every sympathy with your cause and great respect for your vessel. But your captain had earned a beating at my hands, and has received it. You 'll find him inside there,

looking a deal worse than he actually is. A little water thrown upon him will be all he 'll need; but you 'd do well to get that at once. And so: good day to you!"

Then he went down the steps at the schooner's side and trudged away toward the spot on the river-bank where he could see his sleigh awaiting him.

The journey up to the city was much slower than the one down. The heavily laden sledges, some of them drawn by oxen, kept constantly moving, but their day's accomplishment was not great. And, then, the men of the caravan must be provided for, the cattle must be fed, watered, and rested, and a guard must be kept all night through. In these things Anthony's experience with pack-trains in the deserts and mountains served him well; and the morning of the fifth day saw the sledges drawn up at the door of the warehouses and a score of porters busy carrying and trundling the merchandise within.

"Well," said Charles when Anthony finally came into the counting-room, "here you are, and there is your work very well done, my boy: I 'm proud of you."

Anthony slept soundly that night and until noon next day. When he reached the counting-room once more, he found it bustling actively.

"There 's been more real buying and selling in an hour to-day than there has been in the last month," said Whitaker, rubbing his hands, much pleased. "Captain Weir has been at the City Tavern since morning, and you never saw such a stirring as he has around him. The news of the cargo has spread about like a breeze; every one knows of it and seems to want hides and drugs and coffee."

That evening, as Anthony was examining some tally-sheets which Twitchell had given him, word came that Charles desired to see him before he left. A few minutes later Anthony went into his uncle's room; Charles sat in the corner

of his small sofa which was drawn up to the fire, nursing his lame foot and watching the flames as they licked at the hickory logs. He bade Anthony sit down, which the young man did.

"What you 've just done," said Charles, "shows me you are of the outdoor breed, and one who can bring off victory in the face of stern conditions. As I said to Weir a while ago, a man like you would be wasted in a counting-room; and I 'd not like to see that. In a month," and he looked at Anthony speculatively, "the ice will be out of the bay and the *General Stark* can put to sea. A cargo will be awaiting her at New York for Havana; at Havana there 'll be tobacco and rum and sugar for Liverpool; and at Liverpool there 'll be ironmongery, woolens, and piece-goods for the East."

"Well?" said Anthony.

"Word has come that the *Stark's* captain is dead," said Charles.

"I saw him twice while at New Castle," said Anthony, shocked; "and they thought him improved."

"He was a steady, good seaman," said Charles, "and we shall miss him much"; and then, the speculative look still in his eye, "Would you care to take the ship and sail in his place?"

"No," said Anthony.

"Don't be hasty," said Charles. "Let your mind work with the thought a little. Think."

"I have no need to think," said Anthony. "I stay in this counting-room until I 've mastered its history."

"You surprise me," said Charles; "for I felt sure the blood of your grandfather would speak there."

"Perhaps it has," said Anthony quietly.

"Weir said you would n't take the ship; indeed, he said you should n't." Charles laughed and nodded his head. "I

never saw the captain agree with any one as he does with you. He seems to be always of your mind exactly. Whatever you think best, he consents to at once."

And Anthony, as he listened to this, felt a stirring of unrest in his mind; it was a vague thing, yet it left him questioning, and, somehow, insecure.

XX

FEBRUARY passed, and, midway in March, the ice broke in the river and bay, and ships began to move up and down. But while waiting for this Anthony had gone on with his study of the old books of Rufus Stevens' Sons; and the deeper he got into them the more thoughtful and puzzled he seemed, the more elaborate were the notes he took, the more he frowned as he went about his business during the day, and the more he felt a desire for some one with whom to talk and compare judgments.

But, also, there was another interest looming during the late winter and early spring. This was the first of the new ships which Charles had ordered; all winter the work had gone forward at the Siddons yard in Shackamaxon; shipwrights, joiners, blacksmiths, worked under the sheds and in the open; the huge ways were the wonder of the waterfront, and as the oaken hull grew and began to rear people formed parties of a Sunday or a holiday and drove up the river road to see it. The work had reached this stage about the time the ice broke up; and then, with the sight of the moving shipping to stir his blood, Charles began to urge haste.

"The *Rufus Stevens* must be launched, have her masts placed, the rigging bent, and be in the dock receiving cargo by the last week in June," said he.

"That will be six months' building time," said Siddons. "I know vessels have been put into the water in that space, but they were not of this one's quality and substance, seasoned timbers and excellent joining. Six months! Why, sir,

the like has never been done on this river. Here we 've gone through a severe winter; come wet or dry, cold or snow, we 've not missed a day; if we could n't work on the structure, we 've worked under the sheds at making ready the timbers or forging the ironmongery. My calculations were the middle of September at the earliest, and that was promising much, Mr. Stevens."

But Charles insisted; and so the hum of the Siddons yard increased as the spring warmed. Such a hammering and sawing as there was; such a chipping and shaving and boring and fitting the clever old place had never seen before. It had been Anthony's practice, at least twice a week, all winter through, to make a visit to the yard, for the growing might of the *Rufus Stevens* fascinated him. He had been there the day the keel was laid—a keel of solid, seasoned, toughened oak, as surely fitted, as strongly braced as old Rufus' spine had been. And to this grew the ribs, powerful, graceful, bent cunningly to waste the impact of the sea and to give space to the ship's cargo. Then the beams went in to brace the frame—mighty, weighty, strong beams, of live-oak that was like iron; beams that had been nursed and molded and cut to fit by shrewd joiners. Live-oak had been Charles's highest demand—live-oak that had been felled in proper time, and seasoned in the sun and rain and wind. The stem was made of it—a great, cutting stem that would throw the seas lightly apart; the stern-post was of it, and also the transoms, aprons, knight-heads, hawse-timbers, and keelson; and it was all clean and without defects.

And now, in April, the hull towered like a monster against the background of low sheds; workmen swarmed eagerly over it; their hammers *rat-tat-tatted* like the beaks of woodpeckers; the clean smell of wood was everywhere. In a dock at one side floated huge round timbers; the dark mouth of a shed opened down to the water's edge, and here other timbers

of a like kind had been drawn out, and workmen, each with a deftly used adz, were shaping the new ship's masts.

Anthony would walk among the chips and shavings, breathing in the fragrance of them: the level drumming from the hollow body of the making craft filled his ears; the smiths in their dusky forges fashioned red bars into bolts and clamps and hooks as he stood in their doorways; and from the depths of the yard he caught the glint of the full river in the sun; he saw spread sails creeping down to the sea; the smoke of the city floated across the blue sky; the trees were green along the shore; and the spring filled his body as it had when he was a boy. And there was the island, the green, long, narrow island, midway in the river, with the spur of sand shooting out toward the south, which the rising tide would cover.

And then as his mind went back he would see the bobbing head of a youthful adventurer above the water, a naked, white, boyish body breasting the crosses of the current, drifting to leeward of a market-seeking sloop, climbing the bow-chains of an anchored schooner; and then he would see him, slim, exultant, alone, on the rim of the island, waiting for the tide to turn, that he might slip back with it to the dock which had been his starting-place.

But, also, the spring brought other things than the new ship and thoughts and feelings of boyhood. The shackles of winter having fallen from the port, matters sharpened remarkably. Glum faces gave place to eager ones; markets were exceedingly active; merchandise flowed in with gratifying steadiness; cargoes were rich, rare, of unexpected quantity. There seemed scarcely a day but a ship, home-bound from the East, from the West Indies, from the Spanish countries, rounded the bend in the river, her sails full and her decks alive with her company. Each time one appeared a watching merchant thrilled with opportunity; and this thrill

found its way into the crush and scuffle at the City Tavern, in Walnut Street, where traders and dealers and merchants met and arranged their affairs, and bought and sold and drank and smoked. It was a low-ceilinged place, with wide windows, sanded floors, square-setting chairs, and oaken tables. It rattled with tableware and glasses; and it clacked with tongues, offering and accepting, protesting and praising, promising and rejecting. Captain Weir transacted most of the business for Rufus Stevens' Sons that was done here, but Anthony frequently visited the place to get the touch of the market and watch the temper of the moment.

And so, one day, he went in and sat down on a settle by an open window with a glass of French brandy and a pipe, and composed himself for half an hour's comfort. It was a sunny, blowy day with great palisades of white clouds sweeping over the city toward the sea; a tree growing near the edge of the pavement was white with buds; old horses tramping over the stones tossed their heads, and their rekindled eyes seemed to see the green pastures and bright streams of their youth. The brandy had a fine, full scent, and was thick and smooth upon the palate; the tobacco, too, was aromatic and soothing, and Anthony smiled at the day, at his own feelings, at the world; and he sat back, contentedly, to listen and see.

A thick-set little man with bandy legs, and a bullet head set aggressively upon his shoulders, stood near him.

"I understand your brig *Anna and Sarah* is in," said he to a Quaker-looking man. "Is she stowing anything that might take my interest?"

"I have sundry items to offer," said the Quaker-like man. "Rum of approved quality. And West Indian tobacco. On Clifford's Wharf, just taken out of the brig, I have Muscovado sugar in hogsheads, excellent for any common use."

"There 's a plenty of sugar to be had," said the thick-set

man, slapping one of his bandy legs with a whip which he carried. "I could stock a warehouse with brown or white, in an hour. But of your rum, now; what 's that?"

"It is of Jamaica for the most part; but there 's some of Cuba. It 's all of a good age, a rich brown color, excellent strong body, and has been well kept. It is mostly in barrels—barrels once used for sherry, which gives that flavor so much desired; but there is a quantity in puncheons of full ninety gallons, still in the brig, but ready for delivery in a reasonable time."

To Anthony's right was a hook-nosed man who smoked a pipe in nervous puffs; money and exchange seemed to trouble him enormously, and he talked with a stolid, comfortable-looking man across the table from him, in high exasperation.

"I would n't give that for all the beggarly pistareens you could cram into a sack," stated the hook-nosed man, as he snapped his fingers. "Such stuff is not money, and should not be recognized as such. And then your Netherlands guilders, your mark bancos, your florins, francs, livres, and shillings! What has such rattling metal to do with the exchanges of civilized peoples? What right, even, have their names to assume places in the conversations of men of commercial substance?"

"Their place," said the comfortable man, "is small but respectable. And when gathered together they make great weight in the world. Your florin, now, is a realer thing to many a man than your pistole, because it is nearer to his reach. Livres, pistareens, francs, and shillings turn the balance of the world in a time of stress, sir; and they make its prosperity in time of peace."

But the hook-nosed man had an eager and indignant soul.

"I contend," said he, "that the very weight of small coin, of which you seem so proud, is one of the things that hang to the rim of the world and keep it in check. Human-

kind is laboring to-day under a burden of fractional silver that is as overpowering as the copper currency of the past. I contend that heavy money, like heavy bread, is killing to the imagination; and without imagination there is no progress. What inspiration is there in a cold, white coin stamped with the smug features of some fat-natured prince? Is it a thing to lift a man out of the ruck? It is not. Never has the possession of a piece of coined silver caused a man to raise his head and think a thought above his fellows; the sight of such a coin has never made a slave to rebel against his master; a till full of them has yet to make a merchant feel in a fair way of business."

"Enough of them can always be exchanged for others of a higher value," argued the comfortable man.

This fact seemed to inspire the other to increased resentment.

"It should not be," he declared. "There is never a time that I lay out a gold piece and get a pallid collection of silver bits in exchange that I don't feel I've been robbed. I have no grudge against silver as a metal, mark you; for as such it has its uses. It is only when you put a stamp upon disks of it and tell me it's money that I rise up against you. For then it's a cheat; it's a cold unencouraging thing; and for all its pretense it's not quick; the only life it has is that given it by the efforts of men like you."

"Might not the same be said of gold?" asked the other man.

"Never," said he of the hook-nose, positively. "Impossible. For gold, sir, possesses something more than the natural chemistry of its composition. And, in spite of the general belief, learned men of other years did not give their minds to transmuting the duller metals only because of the profit it might bring them."

"What, then, was it?" asked the comfortable man.

"If the truth were known," said the other, "we 'd find that they sought for a life principle which nature had hidden from us, and which gold possesses. It is a thing which the eye can see and the hand touch, but for which we have not a proper understanding."

"Ah!" said the comfortable man tolerantly. "You give a kind of magic to it."

"I do not," denied the man with the hook-nose. "To prove to yourself that there 's rare virtue in gold, you have only to note its effect upon dulled, whipped, and joyless things. Put a piece of it into the pocket of a poor man, and it at once begins to warm him; his eyes see things not visible before; his mind dreams dreams. Many a man has crept, shabby and ashamed, before the face of day; and the touch of gold has brought his eyes to a level, and put some of that curl into his lip that makes life possible."

A number of persons were speaking through the smoke of their pipes at a round table at Anthony's elbow.

"By God!" said one, "she came racing home, two weeks before her time, and looking as fit as a queen! And until she let go her anchor in the stream, opposite my wharf, she 'd never taken in a sail."

"What does your master report?" asked another. "Are there many English or French war-ships in the trade paths?"

"He sighted some sail of them," said the first man, "but they were too far away to give him any worry."

"Two days out from Antwerp the ship *Huntress* had her foremast splintered by a six-pound shot."

"The British are brisk with their shots," grumbled the second man.

"Too brisk," said the third. "And the French are as bad. If they must cut each other's throats, why can't they do it quietly? Here we are at peace with the world and making shift to get our fair share of its trade, and they must

set to popping away at each other, and churning the sea all into a muddle."

"It may be," said a thin voice from the middle of the room, "that I can get your interest for a moment, sir. I am disposing of the cargo of the India ship *Bountiful*. There is ginger and indigo; silk, piece-goods, plain and in patterns: saltpeter, hides, and shellac. All excellent merchandise and ready for sale, inspection, and delivery."

Anthony felt some one slip into the settle beside him; and, turning his head he saw Mr. Sparhawk, trim, perky, and pink of face.

"Good morning," said the little man, smiling and nodding. "The fine spring days are doing you no harm, I see."

"I'm glad enough to see them come. The winter seemed a long one," said Anthony.

"It was," agreed Mr. Sparhawk. "And severe. Exceptionally severe. I do not recall a winter like it in many years." He smiled about the room, with its eddies of tobacco smoke, its reek of spirits and ale, its lifting voices and earnest merchants. "You like this hurly-burly, I think?" said he.

"Yes," answered Anthony.

"Young men always crave conflict," said Mr. Sparhawk. "If it's not of one sort it's of another. Some like to take themselves away to strange places and collect merchandise in perilous ways; others covet the uncertainties of the sea in bringing the goods home; but you, it seems, are the kind who like to measure wits with the sharpers in the exchanges, after the ship is in and the cargo on the wharf."

"While I like the attacks and defenses, the doublings and turnings of merchandizing," said Anthony, "I will not say it is an object with me. I'd much rather be your collector of good in foreign ports, or your shipman who carries them home."

Mr. Sparhawk laughed pleasantly.

"And yet Dr. King tells me you've lately refused the *General Stark*, when your uncle would have made you master of her."

Anthony nodded; but his eyes were fixed upon the earnest traffickers about him. Mr. Sparhawk put his finger-tips together with precision.

"I would have thought," said he, "that to a youth of your active habit of mind that would have been an unusual offer. The *Stark* is an able vessel, I'm told, and a lucky vessel, which means even more."

"I have no wish to go to sea just now," said Anthony.

Mr. Sparhawk was exceedingly good-humored; he nodded and smiled and agreed with the young man's frame of mind.

"I think I can quite understand what you mean," said he. "There are none of us desire to do a thing which we feel is not important. And it was your putting the ship aside and showing an interest in the counting-room and the exchange that made me hold *them* as the things important to you."

Anthony said nothing. Mr. Sparhawk took out a snuff-box; after offering it to the young man, he took a pinch and sat tapping the lid with one finger.

"It is a most interesting thing," said he, "to take note of what different men regard as important. Now, there was your grandfather, a careful, far-seeing man, and who gave a deal of attention to all the small matters of the firm. Then here is your uncle, who would not turn his head to look at one of them."

"Do not results tell when we are right?" asked Anthony.

"They should," said Mr. Sparhawk, "and probably they do. In your grandfather's day," with a nod of the head, "the house worked like a clock. It was regularity itself. One could count upon it absolutely."

"You don't find it so now?" said Anthony, and he looked at the little man keenly.

"Don't mistake my meaning," said Mr. Sparhawk. "It is still a steady house; it is still one to hold to with respect. But the steadiness is not of the same quality. Great strokes are made; fine things are done; but, between them, other things fail most singularly. There seem to be pitfalls, so to speak, where in old Rufus's day all would have been solid ground."

There was a short pause; Anthony laid his pipe upon the window-sill and studied the smiling, perky little man beside him. Then he spoke.

"Mr. Sparhawk," said he, "I wonder do you recall the night last fall when we met at the house of Dr. King?"

"Very well," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Quite well. It was a pleasure, and a surprise."

"Whitaker was there," said Anthony, "and he spoke of several losses Rufus Stevens' Sons had had at sea."

"He did," said Mr. Sparhawk. "I think I could name the very ships."

"They were the *Sea Mew* and *Two Brothers*."

"Right," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Stout, able vessels; well found and competently mastered."

"They were lost, I hear, within a few months of each other," said Anthony.

"Let us say three," said Mr. Sparhawk. "It was less, I think, but, to be quite sure, we'll put it at three."

"And the loss of each was noted at the time as singular, I believe?" said Anthony.

"Unusual," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Quite unusual."

"During these past months," said Anthony, "I have been going into the books of the house for some years back."

"Dr. King mentioned that," said Mr. Sparhawk, and there was a pleasant interest in his face.

"I find in my searching there were other losses before the two we've mentioned," said Anthony. "And there were some after."

Mr. Sparhawk nodded.

"Your grandfather never had a complete loss," said he. "No matter how desperate the mischance, something was always saved from the wreck. And, with his ships, disaster was always written in terms a sailorman could understand: wind or wave, shoal or rock."

"I see what you mean," said Anthony. "None of his vessels foundered in the night, like the *Two Brothers*, and left their companies adrift in small boats on a sea as quiet as a lake."

"That was odd," said Mr. Sparhawk. "That was very odd."

"And the *Sea Mew*?" said Anthony.

Mr. Sparhawk crossed his worsted-clad legs and sat back at his ease.

"Of the two," said he, "the *Sea Mew's* case was perhaps the most singular. There were goods in her to the amount of a half-million dollars, American."

"She sailed from Calcutta, and never made her next port of call," said Anthony. "There was a good breeze, well able to further a ship on her journey, but no more; and yet she was never seen again."

"Nor her crew," said Mr. Sparhawk.

"Nor her crew," said Anthony. "Poor fellows."

"Down into the sea they went with her," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Forty of them, in all."

"That were a worse fate than the *Two Brothers*," said Anthony. "For there, at least, the ship's company was saved and stood by until the vessel sank."

"They were saved," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Yes, that's true. But," and he cocked his head to one side with the

motion that so made him look like a small, old, and very wise bird, "they did not stand by until the ship sank. I call that point to mind very distinctly. She was still afloat when they bent sails to the small boats and put away for the French coast, and so dropped her out of sight."

XXI

ANTHONY sat regarding the other with steadfast eyes; and in his mind he saw the ship's boats slipping away over the quiet sea, and the ship herself, left alone and silent, to any fate that might overtake her. The rats! The detestable, boring rats! This then, was how they had gone about their work! Upon a pretext, they would abandon ship,—no doubt in a given place,—and no sooner were they out of sight than the vessel and her cargo would be taken possession of by some waiting accomplices who came up, ready and eager. Then, away with the rascals to some safe place; both ship and cargo would be sold, and the booty divided between them. But what he would have said upon this point to Mr. Sparhawk remained wordless in Anthony's mind, for just then a man came up to them, a portly man who had the purple tinge of inconsiderate living about his nose.

"I caught sight of you more by chance than anything else," he said to Sparhawk. "I have been poking around after you all morning."

Mr. Sparhawk arose and shook the man's hand.

"There's a deal that hurries me in and out," said he. "I can never be taken for granted at this season of the year." To Anthony he said, "You have met Mr. Stroude, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said Anthony, as he, too, shook hands with the merchant. "I hope I see you well, Mr. Stroude."

"You see," grumbled the merchant, "a man badgered quite beyond his patience, sir. What between getting a ship,

and checking up her cargo, and arranging for the continuance of certain moneys, I 've had enough to fret any reasonable person; and now there must come something else."

"Oh, tut, tut!" said Mr. Sparhawk regretfully.

"It's been my experience," said the merchant, "that no matter how much bother fills a man's day there's still some further devilment in store for him somewhere before he reaches his bed at night." He looked at Mr. Sparhawk. "I am given to understand," said he, "you have found some fault with the *Eclipse*."

"None!" denied Mr. Sparhawk at once. "None. The *Eclipse* is a fine ship, and rates first class."

"Then why has her insurance gone up since I spoke to you last?"

Mr. Sparhawk was more regretful than ever.

"That was a most unexpected thing," he said. "I am very sorry for it. The explanation is this: Mr. Baily holds a large part of your risk, and unfortunately Mr. Baily is not a bold man. All this talk we hear of the French privateers is hard on the courage of persons like him."

Mr. Stroude stared.

"What have French privateers to do with me?" he asked.

"There is one at anchor in the stream just opposite the wharf where your ship is taking in her merchandise. She was fitted out in the early winter, I believe, but received her letter of marque from Citizen Genêt only a few days ago. She was once of Lewes, in Delaware, and was called the *Horatio Gates*. Now she is known as *Le Mousquet*."

Anthony stirred at this, but he said nothing.

"Well?" demanded Mr. Stroude.

"I'm told she is mostly manned by Americans of whom we have no reason to be proud. It came to Mr. Baily's ears to-day that the ship was taking a great interest in yours, and so he became alarmed. He could not forget, you see, that

you are British-born and are still a subject of the king; and while the *Eclipse* is an American ship her cargo is British owned."

Mr. Stroude snorted.

"Rubbish!" said he. "Utter rubbish! Mr. Baily sees an opportunity to get a higher rate from me; and I'll warrant that occupies him more than the chance of a parcel of pirates seizing my goods. But I shall see him before the day is done, and when I do, sir, let him expect some very plain speech from me." Then Mr. Stroude went grumpily toward the door. "British subject! Did I ever try to hide it? For what does the man take me? And pirates! Good God, one would think we were carrying on business on some spot of an island in the Caribbees."

This conversation stirred Anthony's interest sharply; he meant to go into the matter with Mr. Sparhawk, and also into the older and even more engaging affair of the *Sea Mew*; but before he could do so the attention of Mr. Sparhawk was claimed elsewhere, and so he was forced to await a further occasion.

Upon reaching the counting-room on Water Street, Anthony saw Tom Horn re-nibbing a pen by a window; the spring sunshine flooded him, but, for all that, the impression Anthony got of him was of a wan coldness, a luminous, spectral quality such as can be seen in the breaking sea of a summer night. The man paused in his cutting of the pen as Anthony approached; and he said:

"Have I ever told you how I was wrecked when I sailed in the *William and Mary*?"

"I knew you *were* wrecked," said Anthony. "But I've never had any of the details."

"She was an India-built ship," said Tom Horn. "The firm had her of an Englishman. She was of teak, with ribs and beams of English oak. A stout, beautiful ship, and

carrying a great weight of silks and other costly things. When you walked her deck she seemed as safe and solid as a continent; her walls were like the walls of a great building. I've watched the sea churn and leap and break under the wind; but it never seemed as if it could harm the *William and Mary*."

"But you found it could, in the end?" said Anthony. "Let the wind blow hard enough and long enough from the right direction, and anything of man's building seems fragile enough."

"The wind moves in a circle around the world," said Tom Horn. "And the sea does, too. And, as they go, they catch up other winds and other seas; and so they band together and gain force, and crush and rend. The *William and Mary* was within the circle; nothing under God's heaven could save her; she was tossed as a chip is tossed by the wind; she slid down the sides of the great waves as a stone goes down hill. The masts were out of her; and she was low by the head, on the third day," said Tom Horn. "And then we drifted out of the winds' circle. The sea flattened out and the sun shone; and then the officers and crew abandoned her."

"And you remained aboard?" asked Anthony.

"I was supercargo," said Tom Horn. "And all the rich goods in the hold were in my care. Captain Hollister urged me to go, but I would not."

"Captain Hollister," said Anthony. "Was he not once master of the *Sea Mew*?"

"Yes," said Tom Horn. "Another good ship lost at sea." He looked at Anthony, silent for a moment, and Anthony looked at him. And the silence was filled with things that were not said. And then the man went on: "I saw them sail away in their little boats, and I sat on the deck and wondered what was in store for me. I was a full year

in that hulk," said Tom Horn, "drinking the stinking water in the casks, and eating the wretched salt food; and in that time I drifted into still seas and saw strange sights. Once in the quiet of the night, with the sea having no motion, and a full moon hanging above, I saw a great reptile-like thing clamber up over the bow and slip along the deck; amidships it went over the side, and I heard it splash as it went into the water. It left a slimy track, as a monstrous snail might do," said Tom Horn; "and from that time I was afraid. I wanted the sight of land; I wanted the sight of people; I did not want to feel that on all the still seas, under that wide, white moon, I was the only creature with a soul given by God."

"Yes," said Anthony, "I understand."

Just then the door of Charles's room opened, and a long gangling man came out. He nodded and smiled at sight of Anthony. His teeth were large, with wide spaces between them; and from these, the outstanding ears and the pale watchful eyes, Anthony knew he had to do with Rehoboam Bulfinch.

"Good day," said Rehoboam, to Anthony, eagerly. "Good day, sir. It is excellent spring weather, is it not?" He nodded and smiled again, and moved toward the street door. "I have just been having a few words with your uncle. A splendid man. A really wonderful person. It's a pleasure to talk with him."

When the man had gone, Anthony stood for a moment, quite still; then he opened the door of his uncle's room and looked in. Charles sat in the corner of his sofa. He did not turn as the door opened; his eyes were fixed and full of fright; his face was white; his whole body seemed shrunken. Startled, Anthony halted, retreated, closed the door.

"It came unexpectedly," said Tom Horn. "It came out

of the quiet sea, and left a trail of slime across the deck. And after that I was afraid."

"I don't wonder," said Anthony. "I don't wonder, indeed."

XXII

THE end of April saw Anthony draw to the end of his long search among the ledgers. A heap of them lay in his lodgings; and written into the notes which he carried about in his pockets were many curious facts. And in those days the frown between his eyes was fixed, and he went about with lips tightly shut.

"Within a week," he told his uncle, "I shall have done; and then I'll want a long talk with you."

Charles smiled. It was not the quick, vital smile Anthony had come to know, and there was not the snap of the eyes, nor the flash of sound, white teeth.

"Very well," said Charles. "But I'm sure I'll not be able to follow you; for I've never permitted the books to trouble me greatly. However, Weir may be your man for that," with a nod toward that gentleman, who was present. "He has a talent for obscure things."

"If he will contrive to give me his attention when the time comes, I shall be pleased," said Anthony. Then he cocked his eye at them, for both had amused looks and neither seemed to hold the matter as very weighty. "No doubt," said he, "as you see the thing, its promise is a dull one."

"Old ledgers are not like old wine," said Captain Weir. "And while they may be, in a manner, useful, still I can't hope that age has given them any sparkle."

"I'll promise that the items I'll offer will cut into your interest like a flash." He tapped his breast-pocket. "Give me a few more facts like these," he said, "and then a talk

with you will mortar them together. After that, who can say what astonishments are in store for us all?"

Charles had a puzzled look as Anthony went out of the room, and his hands, grown thin and white, picked at the tapestry that covered the sofa.

"He 's like his grandfather, indeed," said he. "A purpose grows fixed with him, and nothing can turn him from it." There was a pause, and then he asked: "What has he come upon in the books, do you think, that has so taken his attention?"

"It would puzzle me to say," replied Captain Weir. "But, then, a pair of quick eyes and an insistent, inquiring mind have often turned up a vital fact in mold deader than Rufus Stevens' Sons' old ledgers."

Charles lay back in his sofa and studied Weir for a moment, his hands still picking at the tapestry.

"You 've never felt much beholden to youth," said Charles to Weir, "and your expressed thoughts on its aspirations and vagaries and proneness to make much of little have always worn a cutting edge. But I 've never seen, in your manner or tone, that you've thought Anthony a fool."

"The man who takes him for a fool," said Captain Weir, with a wry smile, "will quickly learn to alter his opinion." There was a pause; the captain looked through the window into the sun-lit street, his brows were thickened and heavy over his cold eyes. "As to the books," he added, "if your nephew says he 's come at something in them, it 's safe to say he has; and, if he says he means to astonish us, in my opinion we 'd do well to prepare for something unusual."

That night, as Christopher Dent sat in his laboratory, his big spectacles on his nose, a candle beside him and the usual bulky black-letter volume in his hands, Anthony came in. The young man sat down in a chair and lighted his long-stemmed clay; and the little apothecary talked of the prob-

lems that rise up in one's daily path and make life, if not a vexation, at least an uncertainty.

"It is the time of year for dandelions and other soft, early herbs," said Christopher. "The sun has been gentle; the earth is mellow and seems full of gifts; but the plants are late. It may be the winter we've gone through has had much to do with it, for the frost was deep-setting, indeed."

"It was," agreed Anthony.

"Here is a book," said Christopher, "written by a man of sound parts, and in a day when learning was a thing to arrest the attention." His fingers traced the lines of deep black, which made their rigorous way across the yellowed page. "He tells much of the seasons, and of the mysteries and chemistries of the soil. He sees not a deal of difference between the vegetable and the animal; they are both produced from seeds, and are endowed with much the same functions; the element they take in is changed into forms which give growth and virtue, and the power to resist enemies."

Anthony drew at his pipe.

"Strength and power are not always given for protection," said he. "As often as not, they are meant for offense."

"That," said Christopher, "is never so when the regulations of nature are held to. Offense comes of brutality, and brutality is occasioned by an excess of life; nature never gives too much life, for she knows it to be dangerous. The finer aromatic plants, whose proper home is in dry, sandy soils, if transplanted to a moist, rich one, leap up, robustly; they attain to a thick bulk, a vigor not known before, and a rich oiliness of sap. But they lose their fragrance; their active principle is sacrificed to their increased vitality."

"If that's a saying of your scholar, I think he said truly," said Anthony.

"What is true of plants is also true of animals, of men,

and of nations," pronounced Christopher. "Your horse, now, is an excellent servant and a steady friend. But feed him high and work him little and he's hard to control. Give a man riches, and he begins to fatten, if not in body, then in wits; and fat about the wits, as any doctor of the soul can tell you, is a dangerous thing, for it promotes the growth of self, which is the essence of that brutality of which I just now spoke."

From outside came the sharp *rat-tat-tat* of a knocker.

"Visitors to my lodgers," said the little apothecary. There was the sound of feet on the stairs, the opening and closing of a door, and faint voices beyond the wall. "They have many, for people who mingle so little in the social life of the town."

"Men, mostly, I should say," said Anthony.

"Why, yes," said Christopher, "I think that's true, though I had not thought of it before."

"Foreign men, I think you have told me."

"French," said Christopher. "But, then, that is not strange, since they are French themselves."

"I wonder," said Anthony, "have you ever noticed a man go in and out who wore a black patch over his eye?"

"I have, more than once. But he is an American. Do you know," asked Christopher, with some pride, "that the much-spoken-of French minister, Citizen Genêt, has been here?"

"No," said Anthony, and put aside his pipe.

"It was not many days ago; almost as soon as he reached the city. My lodgers seem people of consequence."

Anthony was silent for a space; then he said:

"Have you taken note of any of their American visitors?"

"Yes, I've seen Mr. Tarrant a few times; and once, while he was there, a companion of his, who had not gone in, stepped into my place to be out of the cold. A strapping

young man; and good-humored, too. I never saw any one so ready to laugh."

Then the little apothecary began talking of mademoiselle. Such a fine creature—oh, such a really wonderful young woman! There were so many kindly notes in her voice when she talked to one, and there was so much gentleness in her eyes.

"And she is beautiful," said Christopher. "I have stood and wondered at her, with not a word to say. And she is learned in the plants," with enthusiasm; "she knows the flowers of the roadsides and fields, both by name and by sight. Not our flowers, of course," regretfully, "but then in France they must have many that are rich in fine properties. She was but a child when her interest in nature began," said the little apothecary. "She 'd ramble the fields and wade in the streams with her uncle, who was a botanist and who lived in very pleasant parts. Her telling me this made me think of you," said Christopher, "and of how you 'd journey along with me all through the hot day, seeking coralroot in the woods, about the feet of the trees, and devil's-bit in the meadows, and spotted alder in the low, thick-grown places. She laughed a deal at some of your pranks and wished she had been with us."

"You did not tell her my name?" said Anthony.

"I did afterwards," said Christopher, and he fell to rubbing his smooth crown in a troubled way.

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing," said the little apothecary. "But, indeed, she spoke little more of anything after that; and then she went away."

Anthony sat in silence for a time, and Christopher watched his face with much concern. Then the sound of footsteps was once more heard on the stairs beyond the wall—voices, and a loud thumping that made the windows shake.

"It is a chest being brought down," said the apothecary, listening. "Can it be that they are going on a journey? No coaches start until early morning."

They heard the chest tumbled out through the door, and the crash of it, as it was thrown into a vehicle; there was much rapid talk and a woman's sobs.

"The father is going away," said Christopher; "and the daughter is in tears."

There were hurried good-byes in French, called out amid the rolling of wheels, the door shut, and footsteps went up the stairs. Anthony and the little apothecary looked at each other, for the steps were heavy and stumbling.

"That is the father," said Christopher. "I know his foot. It is the girl, then, who has gone away."

"It would seem so," said Anthony.

"And the chest and the tears at parting tell of a long journey," said the apothecary. "And it must be an urgent one, to be undertaken at this hour."

Anthony said little; it was almost eleven by the clock on the apothecary's wall, and he arose to go.

"You are in low spirits," said Christopher.

"My star is swinging downward, I fear," said Anthony, with the ghost of a smile. "But when it is at its lowest, Christopher, it will begin to curve upward."

"If you knew her better," said Christopher, his hand on Anthony's sleeve; "or if she knew you better—"

"She has shown plainly enough that she has no desire for that," said Anthony. "Good night."

"Good night," said Christopher Dent.

Anthony walked through Water to Sassafras Street, and as he turned away from the river he saw a group of men who stood silently in the shadow of a building. One of them moved toward him, as he appeared, and said in French:

“Citizen, pardon. We cannot find our ship. She is *Le Mousquet*; and we should be on board by now.”

Anthony pointed to where three masts shot up above some low buildings and stood outlined against the copper sky.

“That,” said he, “is the *Eclipse*. I have heard *Le Mousquet* is anchored in the stream, opposite her.”

“We thank you,” said the man. “You are kind.” There was a stir among the group. Anthony stepped back to let them pass; as he did so a blow fell upon his head and he staggered. Then they were upon him like cats; another blow and he was down; and after that he knew nothing.

XXIII

THERE was the smell of cookery; also there was the wash of water; sounds came from overhead—creaking, bustling, familiar sounds; footsteps pattered to and fro; now and then some one spoke, and the words they said had to do with the working of a ship.

Then Anthony realized he was lying in a bunk; he sat up, and as he did so he turned sick, and the little boxed-in place with its dim hanging lamp began to swirl. He put his hand to his head; there was a crust of blood upon his forehead, his hair was matted, and trickles, stiff and thick, ran down his face. He got upon his feet and stood for a moment, hoping his head would clear. The vessel careened slightly, showing she was under a good spread of sail. But she had tacked twice since Anthony opened his eyes, and this attracted his attention. He listened; the sounds that came from a distance were not of open water. They were still in the river.

The door stood open; a gush of cool air struck him, rushing in at an open hatch, and he stood in it, drawing it into his lungs, to fan the low-burning embers of his life. The smell of cookery was stronger now; at a little distance from him he saw the broad back of a negro bent over a caldron in which a mess of meat stewed in the bobbing midst of leeks and carrots and other things. Anthony held to the doorway, and as he stood there the black cook turned. The sweating face held only astonishment for a moment; then it broadened into a wide smile.

"Much blood!" said he in English, and pointed at the young man's head.

Anthony regarded him unsteadily; everything swam and whirled; and he still felt cold and sick.

"What ship is this?" he asked.

"*Le Mousquet*," said the cook. Anthony held tighter to the door-frame and leaned his wounded head against his arms. The cook's smile grew wider; his white teeth gleamed; and he said, now in French: "The last time you were aboard, you came unwanted. This time you were sent for. It makes a difference, citizen, does it not?"

Anthony Stevens, as he stood with his head in his arms, drew in a great breath; sick as he was, though everything sank and rose before him as he turned toward the man, his chin was thrust out; grotesque as his face was, with its hardened trickles of blood, there was that in his eyes that wiped the smile from the negro's face. The man tried to step past him to the companion-ladder, but Anthony warned him back and lurched toward it himself. Slowly he climbed it; he felt as though his heart would burst in his breast. But now he was upon the deck.

To the starboard he saw lights burning in rows and so knew they had not yet dropped below the city. A jib was drawing, as was the mainsail and a topsail; they bellied full in the fresh wind, and the river leaped and gurgled under the vessel's foot. There was a scattering of men along the deck; they looked and whispered as Anthony went aft, holding to the rail, to the housing, to anything that came to his hand. A pilot, muffled in a heavy coat, stood at the wheel; leaning against the bulwark, examining a chart in the light of a ship's lantern, was the man with one eye. The heavy, uncertain step of Anthony caught the officer's attention; he looked up, and as he saw the swaying figure and

blood-daubed face he showed his teeth in his customary smirking way, and his eyes shot malice at his victim.

"Well, my young friend," said he, "I see you once more, do I? And aboard my ship, too! I hardly hoped for that."

"Have I been brought here at your orders?" asked Anthony, holding himself as stiffly upright as his sagging knees would let him.

The master of *Le Mousquet* sneered at him; his side-drawn lips were as mean as a surly dog's.

"Let it be enough for you that you are here," he said; "here, among friends. After your visit to me down the river—you remember that visit, I think?—I felt that I might see you again. But I had no thought it would come about like this."

"Just now," said Anthony, "I have not the strength to answer, or do, as I'd like. And so I ask you put over a boat and have me set ashore before we drop below the city."

The one-eyed man put the heel of his hand against Anthony's chest and threw him against the low top of the cabin.

"You still have that demanding tongue, have you?" he said. "You still think you have but to lift your hand and every one will give way to you." He struck Anthony viciously in the face. "I have something to pay you for, and I'll pay it to the last copper before you are out of my hands."

He was drawing back for another blow when a woman's voice, hurried, breathless, full of anger, said:

"Citizen Captain! Are you a coward, to strike a man so helpless as this?"

It was Mademoiselle Lafargue; she thrust herself between the two, her strong young arm held out to support Anthony, her eyes, full of scorn, upon the master of the privateer.

"Ah, do not be afraid, *citoyenne*," said he. "He is as strong as a wild boar; and this time it is but my hands I use."

But the girl ignored him; she called to some of the people of the watch.

"He is hurt," she said. "Take him somewhere where he can be quiet."

The seamen looked at the captain; and he smirked at the girl and said:

"Take him below; and," to an officer, "see that he stays there."

Anthony was taken below and placed in the bunk he had occupied before. The girl got some warm water from the cook; and she cleaned the gouts of blood from his head and face.

"This is the second time," said Anthony, "that you've stepped between that man and me. And yet he is your friend, and I am your enemy."

She said nothing but went on cleansing the wounds in his head with soft, light touches; her lips were compressed; he could not see her eyes.

"And yet," he said, "why am I your enemy? How have I become so?"

When he was free of the disfiguring blood, she began to bandage his head; and she told the black cook to bring some brandy. She poured some of this into a glass and gave it to Anthony; he drank it readily. Little by little the feeling of helplessness passed. The potent agents in the brandy advanced warmly through his system, and the weakness fell back before them; his wounded head throbbed painfully under the increased activity of his heart; but it also grew steady; things no longer whirled before his eyes, and there were some spots of color warming in his face. He said to her:

"You hold me your enemy, do you not?"

"Your name is Stevens," she answered.

He lay, looking up at her; and then he began to speak. She had once accepted his help; he had been a stranger, yet she had accepted it gratefully. Had she not? Even more than that: she had waited for him that day in Water Street, and she had appealed to him. It had seemed a time of growing trouble, and she had asked his aid. Was it not so? She must have felt, then, that he was one who would be a friend. And yet only a few hours later she had begun to count him as an enemy. Had it been during those hours that she 'd found his name was Stevens?

But she would not talk of this. He must be still. He was ill; he had been badly hurt. Excitement was bad.

There was nothing in the world so soft as the touch of her hands. They were white and wonderful; and so quick! They were dazzling! And each motion was full of meaning; each little turn they made brought him ease.

But in a moment he had frowned these thoughts away; he kept to his questions. In a few hours—it was no more than that—she had come to look upon him as an enemy, and, God knew, it must have been as an enemy bitterly held; as for himself he 'd not stab a dog with that same insolence and disregard. And she had turned against him so because she 'd found his name was Stevens. Who had told her? Some one had. Was it Tarrant? Was it?

Yes, it was! She said it briefly, coldly! And now he must talk no more. It was bad for him. His hurts were worse than he thought. Quiet would help heal them.

But quiet was the last thing in his mind at that moment; and he put her words aside with an abrupt finality. So it was Tarrant who told her who he was. Tarrant, of all people! What more had he said? What bitter twist had he given his words; into what dirty by-path had he led her

mind? The learning of his name alone could not have had the effect he 'd seen.

There was a swift anger in her voice as she answered. Was it possible that she, her father's daughter, could think of him as different from his house?

He hung to this doggedly, his eyes upon her face. What did she hold against the house of Stevens? What thing had been told her, that its very name should turn her so instantly. The concern had long years of fair dealing behind it; it was well established in the public regard. What guilt could she point to? What offense did she carry in her mind?

And with that her reticence broke down; and, with a whip to her words that cut, she spoke freely. Her father had striven all his life to do what a man should do and had held himself well in the eyes of his neighbors. In a business way none had a fairer name than he; among merchants, bankers, ship-owners, agents, there was no one entitled to more consideration. For years he had been the French representative of the house of Stevens, a post, so it was thought, of profit and honor; and it had been envied him. But it was a connection that finally earned him suspicion rather than honor; it brought him the distrust of associates; through it, he stood upon the verge of disaster. Why should not the name of Stevens turn her bitter? Would n't it be strange if it did not? Shadowy tricks, ruses, subterfuges, veiled rascalities, and double-dealing! What sort of people make a practice of using an honest man's name where it had not been given, and who but rascals would lay claim to insurances on vessels that had never been lost?

Anthony was up at this—up so quickly and sharply that the white of the bandage began to show spots of red. Ships that had never been lost! What ships? But, no; she would not answer; she would not say a word more; he must lie down; see, he was bleeding! He did as he was bidden; but

his questions did not stop. She fought him for a space; but again her anger arose, and she talked. Her father was a kindly man; of those who had earned his trust he could believe no wrong, and he had not heeded those people in Brest who had spoken against the house of Stevens. At last, however, there came a time when he had to heed; and then, almost as a part of it, came the letter of Magruder.

Anthony looked up at her with a narrowed, shiny eye. So there had been a letter from Magruder? Her answer was spoken quietly; but he felt he had never known what scorn was until that moment.

Yes, there had been a letter. It was this that had caused her father to venture from France that he might clear his name and recover what was his own. But Magruder was a coward! He dared not have it known that he talked to them, and that is why they had visited his place so late at night. Anthony wrested that from her. And she had gone in and found him dead. Magruder had warned them; and he had paid the penalty.

"Yes," said Anthony. "And it was the thing he feared." He looked at her with steady eyes. "And so you went into Magruder's counting-room—you went alone—and found him dead. And afterwards some one told you you'd been seen leaving the place; and also that suspicion had begun to whisper concerning you. Who told you this? Was it Tarrant?"

Yes! Her eyes flashed as she said it. It was Tarrant. He had told her that; he had told her more than that.

What? Anthony was upon the suggestion like a terrier, eager, worrying. What was it? And the scorn in her eyes was deeper, as she answered.

"Another was seen to leave Magruder's place," she said. "It was a man. He left it secretly, quickly. And, as he

thought, unnoticed. As no word has been spoken of this he has felt safe; he has been content to allow the blight of his guilt to fall upon a woman."

Anthony lay very still; but his eyes held to her. And he told himself it was worth a great price—even the cold scorn laid upon him—to see so much spirit in a human face. Then he spoke.

"And Tarrant has told you all this?" She said nothing; but her look was enough. "Very well. And it was Tarrant, also, who advised, I think, that you leave the city in this ship to escape some action of the officers of justice." He searched her face keenly and then said: "Why is your father not with you?"

"My father must remain where he is, to force his claims against those who have wronged him."

She turned to go, and this time he did not stop her. She would leave the brandy, she told him; and she would see that some one was within call if he needed help. Then she left him. And he lay still for a long time and thought of the things she had said.

She and her father had come to America for the same reason that had brought him north. Well, well! Magruder had sent to France for them. And they had gone to the trader's counting-house, as he had gone the second time; and they had found him dead.

What a scurrying and scampering there must have been in the burrows under Rufus Stevens' Sons when the rats scented their danger, thought Anthony. They had feared the girl's speaking with him, and so had poisoned her mind against him. They had seen even greater peril in Lafargue's going straightforwardly to Charles, as he must have done; and, to prevent this, they had cleverly diverted against the firm the very tide of suspicion which Magruder had thought to set against themselves.

"Oh, the rats," said Anthony; "oh, the damned, scampering, crafty rats!"

But why were they sending the girl from the city? He frowned over this perplexedly. The matter had a meaning he could not see. Then, as he pondered, there came from the back of his mind several things which arranged themselves oddly, and yet confidently, before him.

"What now?" said Anthony, looking at them, and frowning more than ever. "What now?"

The first of the things dealt with was his pause overnight at the Brig Tavern, off the New Castle road. The girl and her father had been there; and they had been associated with persons concerned in fostering piracy, to be carried on under French letters of marque.

"No doubt of that," acknowledged Anthony, and eyed the fact grudgingly; "they stood very intimately with them, indeed."

The second of the things was equally positive, and had been fathered by Christopher Dent on that very night. Many people had visited the Lafargues at their lodgings, French and American; Citizen Genêt, whose words and acts in behalf of legalized piracy had lately filled the public ear and eye, had been one of them.

"Yes," said Anthony, endeavoring to stare the fact out of countenance, "all that is true. But what has it to do with mademoiselle being on board this ship without her father?"

And just as the two things seemed to be wavering, and not at all certain of their purpose, a third fact advanced smartly to their help, and at once set itself to lighting lamps in Anthony's mind. And so, where he had groped before, he now saw clearly.

"The daughter is young," he said. "The father is old. The girl is strong of will; the old man is shaken and infirm.

She is his right hand, his prop, the active half of his mind. If she were taken away, he 'd be helpless; if she were not constantly at his side to guide his judgments he might be imposed upon. The father is a friend of the French agent, Genêt; and it is Genêt who commissions American-built and American-manned ships to sail against the English."

The three facts merged victoriously into one shining result, and Anthony studied it. The girl's fears had been played upon; she was being sent away, and the old man was being held in the city that he might be turned to the crafty uses of Tarrant and his friends.

Anthony smiled and ceased to plague his throbbing head. This was the kernel of the thing! And so he put all thought from him, composed himself to sleep, and slept soundly.

XXIV

WHEN Anthony awoke he lay still for a space and listened. The river-water washed under the schooner's foot; he could hear the creak of the blocks and that flapping of sail that tells of little wind. A dim gray picked its way through the darkness, for the dawn had entered at the companionway.

Anthony stood up; the sleep had done him a deal of good; his head was steady, and the pain had all but gone. He took a draft of the brandy and stretched himself with wide-flung arms; then he stood frowning and considering. *Le Mousquet* was a schooner. He knew schooners; he had both stowed and sailed them; and he knew what was possible and likely aboard one. *Le Mousquet* was private-armed, and manned more than likely by a reckless, insubordinate company, not to be trusted with arms, save in the presence of an enemy. The officers would possibly carry pistols when on duty. At this hour there was hardly more than one on deck; the others would be snoring in their beds.

Anthony stepped across a man who lay asleep outside the door, and went quietly on deck. The river looked cold and quiet: the sails were drawing but little; the watch were muffled in heavy coats to keep out the chill touch of the mist. Anthony moved the length of the deck unnoticed, and down at the after hatch. Here on this side was the captain's room. This, on this hand, would be the room shared by the lieutenants; and here would be the room where the small arms would likely be stored. He examined the lock on this door; it was stout, but the woodwork was worn, and the door loose,

and he shoved back the bolt with the blade of his knife. Muskets were racked against the wall at one side; the other bristled with pistols and cutlasses, and a low door opened into the magazine. Methodically, Anthony put three brace of pistols aside; then, one by one, he slipped the remainder noiselessly through the low port-hole into the river; and the muskets, to the number of three dozen, followed them. With powder and ball taken from the magazine, he loaded the pistols he had kept; then he stowed them about his person and went out of the room.

From the other side of the lieutenants' door came the grumbling of a man half asleep, and Anthony went in. The officer was sitting up in his bed yawning and scratching his unshaven jaws; he stared at Anthony, surprised; then out of the bed he came with a leap and reached for a pistol that hung from a hook by the trigger-guard. Anthony also grasped at it, and as they struggled the weapon roared thunderously in the narrow space. Desperate at the sound, Anthony tore the pistol from the man's hand and struck him with it shrewdly, and he fell; then the young man whirled about to meet the master of the schooner entering at the door. In trying to avoid the blow that curved toward him, the one-eyed man fell; and as he did so he set up a roaring.

"On deck! Help! Drive a knife through this devil!"

But Anthony wasted no time; in the captain's cabin he threw open the cupboard doors and saw a brace of silver-mounted pistols upon a shelf. One of these, together with the lieutenant's empty one, he threw from a stern window; then with the other he turned to face the officer of the watch whose boots were clumping down the short ladder. At sight of Anthony this man fired; but the young man flattened himself against the wall and his return shot sent the privateersman writhing to the deck with a broken shoulder. Snatching up the man's weapon, Anthony ran up the lad-

der to the main-deck. The watch was hurrying aft; he could see the black face of the cook above the edge of the forward hatch. Pitching the two empty pistols over the rail, he drew out one of those he had loaded himself.

"Keep your places!" he growled. The blood had started to ooze from his wounds once more and stained the bandages about his head; and as he stood with hunched shoulders menacing them with the pistol the sailors halted. "Close the forward hatch," directed Anthony, "and fasten it down!" They hesitated; he sent a shot rattling among them, and then they leaped to obey. Again an empty pistol went over the side, and a fresh one appeared in his hand. To the man at the wheel he said, "Stand away!"

The man did as he was bidden; and under Anthony's hand the bow of the schooner began to creep around toward the shore. While it was still turning, Mademoiselle Lafargue appeared on deck; her quick glances took in the sullen group of seamen amidships and the grim figure at the wheel.

"In five minutes," she said quietly, "the ship will be aground."

"I had reasoned it at a trifle more than that," said Anthony, giving eye by turns to the schooner's course and the muttering watch. "But a few minutes more or less makes no odds."

She regarded him coldly.

"The two men below are desperately hurt," she said.

"I note that the captain is in no hurry to make a third," said Anthony, cocking his eye toward the after hatch. Almost as the words left him the master of the schooner popped his head above its edge; instantly the long pistol lifted and exploded; the ball tore away the combing, within a foot of the head, and it disappeared like magic. There was silence after this, and with a fresh pistol Anthony casually menaced the watch. The warm, thick smell of a marshy shore came

from the nearing bank; birds were whistling; beyond the trees a plowman was heard calling to his horses. The bottom of the schooner scraped, and a shudder ran through her to the tips of her masts. Then she struck; the sails flapped uselessly, and the stern swung about to the tide.

"Lower away a boat," directed Anthony, his frowning eyes on the watch. "And make haste. There are some among you whom I have to thank for the hurts I got last night; which struck the blows, I don't know, but a few leaden slugs may pick them out." He handled the pistol with a readiness that carried fright into their hearts. "Lower a boat."

A small boat was swung over the side and rested upon the water.

"I shall need two men," said Anthony. "You will answer, and you," nodding to two of the seamen. "Get in." The men did so readily enough; and then he turned his eyes upon Mademoiselle Lafargue. "If you please," said he, and waved his hand toward the boat. She reared her head, her eyes darting scorn and resentment; but she did not move from where she stood. "I am going ashore," he said, "and as this ship is no place for you it is a good chance to leave her."

"I shall not leave her in your company, at all events," she said coldly.

"I expected you to say something like that," said Anthony. "And I would like to reason the matter out with you. But it is best that there be no delay. I beg of you to step into the boat."

But she would not; and she defied him with her eyes. He motioned to the watching seamen.

"Put her into the boat."

"You would not dare!" she said, her coldness flaming into anger.

"Put her into the boat," said Anthony.

In a few minutes she was handed into the waiting boat; she made no protest, no resistance, but sat in the bow and covered her face with her hands.

"Now, my bullies," said Anthony, as he stepped to the rail, "stand well back. If I see a head of one of you until I get ashore, I 'll speak to you with this," and he motioned with the pistol.

The two seamen pushed off and fell to the oars; Anthony sat athwart the stern, the pistol between his knees, the rudder handle in his left hand; he watched the schooner, the men pulling the boat, and also the landing-place which he had selected. Within ten minutes they had reached a platform built upon spiles, and used by river sloops in taking in the produce of the farms. Anthony was the first out; he helped Mademoiselle Lafargue ashore, and then they both stood silent upon the little wharf and watched the boat pull back to *Le Mousquet*.

ANTHONY examined the schooner's position, while the boat pulled toward her; her nose was wedged into a mud flat, but as her stern had moved around toward the north he knew the tide was working up the river.

"In an hour," he said, "there will be water enough to float her off." He turned toward the girl; she had her cloak drawn about her, and her eyes were still on *Le Mousquet*. She seemed to have no regret at leaving the vessel; but the manner of her leaving had left her furious.

"The next thing," said Anthony, "is to procure a conveyance and get you back to your father."

"You need not trouble yourself," she said.

"As I am the cause of your being here," said Anthony, "I owe it to you to see you safe."

"I cancel all obligations," she said. "You owe me nothing."

Anthony looked at her stubbornly.

"Very well," said he. "Then I owe it to myself. And in debts owing to myself I always demand payment in full." He looked inshore, over the fields, green with the freshness of April; on a knoll, about a mile away, were the white walls of a house amid a screen of trees. "There's a farmstead," said Anthony; "we can find some means there of getting back to the city."

"I shall not stir," said Mademoiselle Lafargue.

"It's plain enough," said Anthony, "that you do not greatly favor my company. There are certain things which you believe of me; you've been told of plottings, of guilt,

of treachery; and the shadow that I stand in is, no doubt, a dark one to your eyes. But why distrust me while you have confidences in certain others? For I, at least, have never tried to shoot a man as he slept, and I have never struck one who was helpless."

"I shall not stir from where I am," said the girl.

"It's a full mile across the fields to the house," said Anthony, "but I have no doubt I can carry you."

"You would not dare!" said she, startled."

"I think you used those very words on board the schooner," said he. There was a pause; and then he added quietly. "Will you go willingly, or must I do as I've said?"

She looked at him with level gaze; the fire in her eye was quieted, though her head was as high as ever.

"I will go," she said, "for there is nothing else for me to do. But I do not go willingly. You are compelling me, and I hate you for it."

He said nothing in reply; and so they set off toward the distant farmstead. Here they encountered a human enough man and a woman who stared and listened but who never ventured a word.

"I have need of my horses and men at this season," said the farmer; "but as you are hurt and the lady must needs have some way of reaching the city you may have a pair and a wagon."

An oldish sort of man, who diligently chewed a straw, was called; in a short space he had a span of farm horses harnessed to a two-seated wagon, with a body swinging on heavy leather bands. Anthony handed Mademoiselle Lafargue to the rear seat; then he took his place beside the driver, and they started. Chester was passed in the first half hour. The girl spoke never a word; now and then Anthony looked back at her to assure himself that she was as comfortable as the pitching wagon permitted, and he was also

silent. It was afternoon when the heavy-footed horses crossed the lower ford and began to draw toward the city; the clock in the tower of the state-house, seen across a huddle of painted roofs, told four as they crossed Chestnut Street; and in a little while they drew up before Christopher Dent's door.

Anthony helped the girl out, mounted the white marble steps with her, and knocked. And while they waited he said:

"In a night or two I shall call upon your father; there are things that press for discussion between us. And, if you are so disposed, I should be glad if you were present to listen." She made no reply, standing with her head averted. And he went on: "If any one, no matter who, tells you of danger to yourself in remaining in the city, give no heed to him. Remain with your father; do not be separated from him; for, I warn you, that any possible danger is not with you but with him."

Here the quadroon maid opened the door, and the girl went in; and Anthony made his way to Dr. King's in Front Street. The physician opened the door himself, for he was in the hall, bidding good-bye to Mr. Sparhawk. In the room where the doctor saw to such things, the bandages were taken from Anthony's head.

"A care-free blackguard had you in hand here," said Dr. King, as he looked at the wounds.

Mr. Sparhawk, who had volunteered his services at the sight of Anthony's condition, held a basin of hot water ready, while he also inspected the hurts.

"He did not hold his hand at any rate," said he. "A thief, no doubt," he added. "There are a deal of them lurking about of a night."

While Dr. King dressed his head, Anthony related the circumstances of the attack. At mention of the *Le Mousquet*, Mr. Sparhawk exclaimed, sharply.

"What?" said he. "Will they stop at nothing? Do they dare such things as this? Is a citizen not safe in the streets of his own city? Must we be constantly on guard against a parcel of ruffians?"

"Yesterday I heard you speaking with Mr. Stroude concerning the ship *Eclipse*," said Anthony. "When does she sail?"

"She sailed with the tide, some hours ago," said Mr. Sparhawk. "And so *Le Mousquet* dropped down last night!" The little man shook his head. "There will be devilment enough off the capes to-morrow," he said; "and more than one honest person's money will be put in jeopardy."

After the young man's wounds had been attended to, Dr. King said:

"You should have a rest for a day or two; I would advise your going home and to bed."

"I shall do so," said Anthony, "for my legs are not over-strong under me; and they are telling me of it, more and more plainly every step I take."

Mr. Sparhawk walked with him up Front Street.

"The cunning of these villains," said the little man; "the cunning of them is past all belief. They have managed it so that pillage is becoming a recognized thing; rapine has public approval; loot is so common we think nothing of it."

Anthony smiled.

"I would not go so far as that," he said; "but I agree that there is a deal of guile round about us."

"We boast of our open trade and commercial candor," said Mr. Sparhawk. "We set ourselves up as superior to the Spaniards who hold every port and river they control under private tribute. But, if the truth were known, we have our share of mercantile malpractice here. There are places," said he warmly, "that are regarded as above re-

proach, but which are charnel-houses of business honor; there are men who sit in the full light of public confidence, weaving plots as shameless as any in the art of the spider."

"Where is the law?" asked Anthony.

"The law is inadequate, and I sometimes think, shrewdly kept so."

Mr. Sparhawk held to this strain until they reached Anthony's lodgings in Sassafras Street. The walk had done the young man no good, and his face was white as he said good-by to the little man at the door. Mr. Sparhawk noted this.

"No," said he, "I will help you to your room. These hurts of yours have taken a deal more of your vitality than you think."

Anthony was glad enough to put some of his weight upon Mr. Sparhawk in going up the steep stairs; and the little gentleman also aided him in getting off his clothes and into bed. And then he brewed him an excellent drink.

"And now sleep," said he. "It will help you more than anything else." He lifted the window so that the air might blow in and do its share of the healing; he nodded in a most friendly and obliging fashion as he was about to go, and then his eyes chanced upon one of the bulky old ledgers lying upon a table. "What?" said he, "a ledger? Do you still use your spare time of an evening, so?"

Said Anthony:

"Open the door there." Mr. Sparhawk did so; he saw in the inner room piles of books of a similar kind, and his face changed expression; his eyes met those of Anthony quickly. "They are those which have gone before, and come after, the one on the table," said the young man.

Mr. Sparhawk stroked his chin.

"It is odd how the history of Rufus Stevens' Sons attracts you," said he.

"Not all of it," said Anthony. "But those things which I find of sharp importance I set down in a little book of my own."

The greedy look in Mr. Sparhawk's face increased.

"That, too, is here, I suppose," said he, and he looked about.

Anthony's coat lay upon a chair beside his bed; he reached out and thrust a hand into the breast pocket; but it came out empty. Mr. Sparhawk saw his expression change.

"You carried it there?" said he.

"Yes," said Anthony, "and it's gone!"

Mr. Sparhawk smiled, and nodded.

"Are you surprised?" he asked. "What else was there to expect? Have you not been on board *Le Mousquet*?"

Anthony lay looking at the ceiling; Mr. Sparhawk stood with his hand on the door-latch.

"However," said the little man consolingly, "your loss is not, as the insurers of ships say, complete. You still have the ledgers; and what they've yielded once they'll yield again."

And so, with a nod and a smile and a good-by he was gone. Anthony lay with the coverlet drawn up under his chin, and propped high with pillows; his head throbbed and swam; he drowsed between wakefulness and sleep, and strange pictures lit up his mind. There was a vessel that crossed his sleep—a slim, swift vessel, her sails filled with mist, and driving away over a darkened sea. She was fleeing from him, and he was following, making slow head against winds and storms. Though the ship was a great way off, he could see into her cabin; there was a light there, a yellow light with a spot of red at its heart—and beside this sat a man who wore a patch over one eye, and he smirked over Anthony's note-book, which he held in his hand.

There were strange things in that book; there were matters

that opposed each other fancifully, and told of ships and men and cargoes, and places; and there were other things, like shouted lies. Anthony had studied them and knew them well. And now, as he drowsed, the cabin was gone, the ship had disappeared, the sea had changed to land; but his thought still had to do with books. He sat before a great many of them; they were heavy, sober, and clean; they were the ledgers of Rufus Stevens' Sons, the solid books of a solid house; surely in them no wrong could thrive. But there were flaming lightnings in the sky; the world was full of pain and weariness, and the books held knowledge which he must have; so he began to open them. They seemed countless; each was like the other in its dull leather, and their rows stretched across plains and streams, and through cities, away among vague spaces, and disappeared in the rising of mists, the booming of waters, and the dashing of spray.

And now, under his hand, were the books of Lucas, and the books of Carberry. These he especially desired. They were thick and seemed to promise pleasant things; but they opened evilly; the mind sprang back from their pages, repelled. But, for all that, they were well and carefully written, just as he had been told they would be. Lucas had set down his statements in a useful hand, clear and with excellent spacing. Carberry's way was well ordered; he had a confident, clerkly smoothness, which all but covered astonishments that caught the breath from one's lips. But Anthony found himself held among the pages of Lucas much oftener, for Lucas's day, so it seemed, had been one of rare daring; there had been courage and devilment in his time, and no great care. The waters had been awash with costly stuffs; ships were sucked to their doom, and dead men had floated down the byways of the sea.

Now he saw a river sealed with ice, and through the ice

countless bowsprits poked forlornly; many eyes looked through a thickening mist, eyes with black patches over them; then a ship loomed through it, a ship with sides as wide as the world; a man in a bo'sun's-chair was let down; he held a pen and ink-pot and along the water-line of the ship he wrote unreadable things in a practiced hand. Anthony strove to understand the words, but could not. He fought with the mists to see the man's face. Once he fancied it was a clean-cut, handsome one with cold eyes and a sneer about the lips; but as he pronounced Tarrant's name the face changed. It was now a bright one, full of inspiration and eager purpose. Anthony looked to find how the man sat in the chair and saw he was nursing a lame foot. But it could not be Charles! For the man was of splendid bulk; as he wrote he laughed, and the mist whirled at the sound, and the waters leaped and threw it back.

And then the books came again,—the weary, weary books,—greater than before and bursting with threats. The pages were hard to turn; it took all the strength he had to come to the smallest thing, and, oddly enough, between the leaves he found those muskets and pistols which he had thought at the bottom of the river. And, as he took up each, the touch of the iron told him he'd best put them carefully by for need in a future time. And this he did, for the menace in the books made his heart feel cold.

Here there was a blank: and then he found himself traveling an endless road, through a waste place, and carrying a burden, a torturing, breaking burden, the essence of which could be nothing but despair. When he felt he must sink under it, it suddenly became light and desirable; he wanted passionately to go on with it. And then he saw it was a girl, and that she hated him; so he put her down, and talked with her. All the air about her was filled with words, each with wings like a bat; they whispered in her

ear as they flitted by, and it was the evil of these words that made her hate him.

He looked along the endless road, through the waste places; a bleak sky lowered over it, the air that stirred its dust was mournful, and the soul in him grew fearful that he must travel it alone! Where was her father? He would speak to him, for her father was wise with years and must know the venom of false words. And then she was no longer there; her father stood in her place, an old, old man, with a white, high-held head; and to him Anthony began eagerly to pour out his thoughts. But he stopped, for he saw a scar on the old man's face, the puckered red mark of an ancient sword-stroke; and the old man moved toward him with the soft sure steps of a great cat. Anthony, in horror, protested; and he could hear his voice lifting through all space against the cold derision in the aspect of Monsieur Lafargue. Then, with the damp of fear on him, he labored heavily through the zone of half-sleep and burst into wakefulness.

He was still in bed next day. Dr. King came to see him; he had his breakfast, which the good woman who rented the lodgings brought him, and then lay back, thinking. The spring day fluttered in at the window; a man who had early greens to sell chanted their quality and price in the street; a knife-grinder's bell tinkled steadily along; the voices of some children arose gleefully from a garden. There was a knock on the door, and Captain Weir came in. He shook Anthony's hand, and sat coldly down by the bed.

"Sparhawk visited us at the counting-room this morning," said he, "and we were astonished by what he had to tell. What does the doctor say?"

"That I shall be fit and out to-morrow," said Anthony.

"That is excellent. The rogues," said Captain Weir,

"to attack you in the open street, and carry you aboard ship!" His green, stone-like eyes searched Anthony. "She was a Frenchman, I understand."

"She flew the French flag," said Anthony.

Captain Weir shook his head.

"I understand," said he. There was a moment's silence; his eyes still searched the young man, and then he spoke again. "It was quite fortunate that Sparhawk walked home with you yesterday. He says you went quite weak."

"More so than he thought," said the young man.

"You have very pleasant quarters here." Captain Weir looked about, approvingly. "Quite snug for a bachelor; your pipes and tobacco, your wine-flask and brandy-bottle near at hand, your books on a rack where they may be had in a moment." His eyes, like those of Mr. Sparhawk, rested upon the bulky ledgers; and he smiled oddly. "That is the last of them, I suppose," said he. And, as Anthony nodded, the captain went on: "All the others have gone back to your uncle."

"No," said Anthony; "those of interest are inside there."

Captain Weir laughed; but his eyes narrowed as he said:

"If Sparhawk had seen those, he'd have marveled at your industry."

"He saw them," said Anthony. "We had some conversation about them."

"Trust an old gossip like him for that," said the captain, the narrowed eyes cold and green, and more like stone than ever. "Nevertheless, he's a useful little man, and with quite a place in the community."

The two talked for some time of Anthony's misadventure; then Captain Weir arose to go.

"We shall expect you to-morrow, then?" said he.

"I think I can safely say that," answered Anthony.

"Your uncle will be interested to hear your story," said

Captain Weir. "It is not a usual one." He stood looking down at Anthony; the side of his face was turned toward the window and the sword-cut along his jaw was red and puckered and angry-looking. "No," he added, and shook his head, "it is not at all a usual one."

Then he bade Anthony good day, and warned him to rest quietly; then the door closed behind him, and the young man lay listening to his footsteps as they sounded on the stairs.

XXVI

HOWEVER, it was not until the second day had passed that Anthony felt firm enough on his legs to go to the counting-room. It was about noon when he set out, and he noted that there seemed an unusual hubbub in the streets. Knots of people were gathered before taverns; public places frequented by merchants seemed to bristle with excitement. Anthony saw no one with whom he was acquainted, and so he had reached the London Coffee-House before he learned the cause of it all. Here a placard was pinned to a board; he stopped to read it, and so learned that the American merchantman *Eclipse* had been taken on the high seas by a French letter-of-marque. His brows knitted with interest at this; and so, instead of turning into High Street as he would have done, he continued along Front to Walnut Street, and into the City Tavern.

There were many there, and they had the appearance of having sat at the tables in the public rooms many hours; pipe smoke eddied under the low ceiling, and glasses were drained and refilled with a steadiness that was eloquent of the public mind; voices were at high pitch, words were hot with resentment, and fists banged upon the tables.

Mr. Stroude sat with his friends about him. He talked solemnly. From the first,—from the very first, so he said,—he had known he was a marked man. Vainly the friends sought to break down this conviction; but he was resolved, and they could not budge him. A deal of his substance had gone into that ship, much more than even his intimates realized. The heel of adversity was heavy upon his neck;

and God keep the day when those who heard him should know the weight of it. A voluble friend strove to cheer him up. There was no knowing what would happen. The worst had already occurred, and anything more would be for the best. And, look you! The pirate, now that he had taken Stroude's ship, must bring her into an American port, as there were no others open to him. And then we should see! Had not the Government denied the right of the French to equip or man vessels of war in American waters; and in the face of this could the *Eclipse*, or her contents, be condemned or sold? Would the weakest of governments permit an outrage to be carried so far? To a man, the friends agreed that it would not; and one of them directed a waiter to bring more brandy.

After Mr. Stroude had drunk of this, he said he was an Englishman, and that he had always taken pride in the fact. Yes, he sat in the midst of them, confessedly English; he felt his nationality to the marrow, and he would take not one jot of it back. These things, he knew, placed his merchandise in all the greater jeopardy; but that could not alter his feelings. The cargo of the *Eclipse* was his and so was not under the protection of the United States when on the high seas. The ship, being American owned, he would grant them; but the cargo—no. His personal case was weak; it was pitifully weak! But what could he do?

Anthony saw Mr. Sparhawk some little distance away; and talking with him was a lank man in baggy small-clothes and a ratty-looking wig.

"Sympathy," said the lank man, "is of no use when the loss is one of hard money. And, more than that, it is given to the wrong person when it is given to Stroude. If the cargo is condemned, does he suffer? He does not. Who does?" The lank man thumped his lean chest. "I do," said he.

Mr. Sparhawk held up a quieting hand.

"The rumor is," said he, "that the *Eclipse* was taken within the capes. If that be so, there is an end of it. Hostile acts have been done within jurisdiction of the United States; American property has been seized by a vessel under a foreign flag."

"I have been ill advised," complained the lank man. "When it was known that Stroude was an Englishman and a thing like this likely to happen, I should have been cautioned."

"If you will look back, Mr. Baily," stated the perky little man, "you will recall that you were not only cautioned, you were warned. But you did not choose to use the information given you except as a means of getting a higher premium on the risk."

"But who would have thought it possible that these wretches would go to such a length?" pleaded Mr. Baily. "In this day, right under the noses of the authorities; and now they are laughing at us all, and making ready to divide the spoil."

Mr. Baily refused any such cheering thing as a drink, and went away, insisting that the worst had happened. Anthony approached Mr. Sparhawk, who sat with a composed countenance in the midst of the excitement, and exchanged greetings with him.

"I am pleased to see you so firm upon your feet," said Mr. Sparhawk. "A little care, now, and you'll do well enough." He fingered the stem of his glass and smiled easily at the room. "Well," said he, "the further venturings of your friends in *Le Mousquet* have made a deal of stir."

Anthony nodded.

"It was an impudent thing to do," said he. "And I'm inclined to think, it also had in it some elements of stupidity."

Mr. Sparhawk smiled, crossed one leg over the other, and dandled his foot.

"A little good wine at this hour is a comforting tonic for an ailing man," said he. And thereupon he spoke to a waiter, who brought them a liquid that was like pale gold. This Mr. Sparhawk sipped approvingly and nodded over the glass's edge at Anthony. "There is a deal of concentrated life in a thing like this," said he; "and it's often found to hold many a problem ready reasoned." They sat silently for a space, allowing the flavor of the wine to take possession of them; then Mr. Sparhawk nodded through the pipe smoke and huddles of debating men. "Who do you see at yonder table—there, under the portrait of Admiral Jones?"

There was Tarrant, lolling in a chair, and plainly having drunk too much; beside him was the big young man, showing his fine teeth in ready smiles, and keeping the bottle ready to his hand. Rehoboam Bulfinch sat with them, a meager drink before him, and folded up like a scraggy vulture.

"Tarrant," said Mr. Sparhawk, "served his country for a short space, and has done his utmost to discredit it ever since. And Blake is as infamous a ruffian as ever trod a deck."

"Blake," said Anthony, his attention quickened.

"He of the great body and the engaging laugh," said Mr. Sparhawk.

Anthony valued the rare drops upon his tongue with true appreciation; he looked toward the big young man and smiled.

"There is a man," pronounced Mr. Sparhawk composedly, "who should have been gibbeted five years ago. He has done more mischief among shipping than any other sea-thief since Edward England; and England's day was a century since."

"I heard a deal of Blake in the gulf and in the Carribees a few years back," said Anthony. "The nearest I ever came to meeting him was while I was in a Spanish brig trading in those waters; two days out of Martinique we sighted him and ran him topsails under by nightfall. But once I had a communication from him."

"Ah!" said Mr. Sparhawk.

"He was a part and parcel of the New Orleans Government, and had a fleet of luggers among the islands and reefs at the mouth of the Mississippi. He had an agent in the city—a fat old spider whom I had to speak plainly to on one occasion; and because of this I could not afterwards get a ship, the owners being afraid to have on board a man who had affronted the pirate. So I began to give my attention to matters ashore, and it was then that Blake sent me the piece of writing. My interference had cost him some choice plunder, and he expressed regret that my change of occupation put him out of the way of meeting with me. But he hoped chance would throw us together at some future time." Under the swathes of bandages, Anthony cocked his eye in the direction of the freebooter. "Now that I see him," said he, "a thought troubles me. It may be that he does not know who I am."

"It is possible," said Mr. Sparhawk.

"On that chance," said the young man, "I think I will speak with him."

He made his way through the gesticulating merchants and stood at the table where the three men sat. Tarrant looked at him with sneering insolence. Bulfinch pushed back his chair; but Blake's manner was of cheery tolerance.

"What?" said Blake. "Is it possible? Here you are, active as a cat, and I thinking you on your back through a bad mishandling."

"Your friends made a shrewd try to bring that state,

about," said Anthony. "But I managed to overreach them." His gaze went to Tarrant and back again to Blake. "Your one-eyed man seemed willing enough; but he has little talent for desperate work. In a crisis he fumbles like an old woman."

Blake roared at this.

"Like an old woman!" said he. "By God, I must tell him that!"

Anthony stood looking down at the man, and, what with his pale, drawn face and his swathed bandages, he made a grim figure enough.

"It was only a moment ago that I learned your name," said he. "And the sound of it recalled a letter I once had of you at New Orleans."

Blake wrinkled his brows good-humoredly.

"A letter," said he. "Well, now! As I write very seldom, you must be a person of even more consequence than I thought."

But Anthony paid no heed to this mockery.

"I am the same Anthony Stevens who once spoiled your plundering of certain ships owned by Señor Montufars. The letter expressed a pious hope that chance would one day throw me in your way. And, as you see, it has."

Blake leaned back in his chair, shaking with mirth.

"Now," gasped he, "could anything be more like you? It's just what I'd have expected you to do—full of gallantry, open and anxious to come to grips with the immediate occasion." He gestured his appreciation. "Let me assure you, sir, now that I *have* chanced upon you, I wouldn't have missed the meeting for the world."

"In the seas I've sailed," said Anthony, "and the ports I've frequented, I found your name common talk; they said you were a bully who feared no one and only studied your own desire." He frowned down at the freebooter disbe-

lievingly. "But, to say the truth, I have n't found you so. For all your written wish, I've yet to see you lift a hand."

"Never fear," said Blake cheerily; "my day will come."

"I promised you, that morning at the Brig Tavern, we'd meet again," said Anthony. "And if it was n't for the work of the rats you urged on me out of the darkness," and he touched his wounded head, "I'd see to it that you had your chance to-day."

"Time will show," said Blake smilingly. "Don't bother your mind. Time will show."

"The forehanded spirit never leaves things to time," said Anthony. "A venturesome man would have been on *Le Mousquet*, knowing I was to be brought aboard."

"God damn your soul!" said Blake. "I'd give my two thumbs to have been."

But Anthony curled his lip.

"Your captain had little bowels," said he. "And you've given me no proof that you have any more."

He went back to Mr. Sparhawk and sat down. The little man eyed him with attention and observed quietly that when the vitality was low the emotions drew hard upon it; and he forthwith had more of the golden wine set before them. And while Anthony renewed himself with the drink Mr. Sparhawk spoke. It was a sound commercial and legal precept, so he said, to dare nothing unnecessarily; also, a hostile intelligence should never be given a clear view of one's mind. But, although he believed these were safe things, still he knew youthful and sanguine temperaments took much satisfaction in not observing them. He shook his head in discreet reproof and sipped sparingly at his wine. That Blake was a pirate, and that this man was Blake, he was quite sure. There could be no mistake. But the villian was free to come and go as he pleased; no stay could be put upon him; for, while the Spanish, the British, the Portu-

guese, and French had much to charge him with, the United States had nothing. He had never fired a shot at an American vessel, or stood on an American deck with hostile intent. Not, indeed, that Mr. Sparhawk thought him any too good; for he was rogue enough for any purpose. Perhaps he had kept himself free of blame in the state ports because one day he might need a haven to run into from the gunboats of the nations he 'd preyed upon.

"But that he is free to come and go is not his reason for being here now," said Anthony.

Shrewdly said! Mr. Sparhawk agreed with this. There would have been a hue and cry had Blake been hunted out of his wallows in the gulf and the Caribbees. No, there was another reason. Hark to this! It might be that the letters of marque given out by the new French envoy attracted him, he seeing prospects of a deal of loot in their protection. But Mr. Sparhawk, so it seemed, put this idea forward only to demolish it; for, as he said, Blake had arrived in the port some months before Citizen Genêt stepped from the French republican ship at Charleston.

"It may be that the pirate had word of the Frenchman's coming," said Anthony.

Again, pointedly said! Mr. Sparhawk nodded in high good humor. It was really a pleasure to talk with a young man like Anthony; after all, there was nothing in the world like an active mind. Yes, it was quite possible that the freebooter knew of Genêt's coming; also, it was quite possible that others knew of it. Indeed, and Mr. Sparhawk grew quite confidential and very low of voice, that some others knew of it first was quite likely—others who were interested in such possibilities, and gave attention to making the most of them.

"What others?" asked Anthony.

Mr. Sparhawk smiled and shook his head; then he took

out his snuff-box, which was of gold and scrolled very handsomely upon the lid. He offered it to Anthony; but, no, the young man would not have a pinch, for there was his hurt head to think of. So Mr. Sparhawk took some alone and sat tapping the box reflectively.

There were some things of which we are quite sure, he told Anthony, but of which we can give no very definite account. Very frequently matters went forward which one's mind could sense but which one's eye could not see. The days in which they found themselves were trying days. Honest men were much called upon to protect their rights; and dishonest ones were quick to take advantage. And these advantages were many. Wars for the complete unsettling of human society were going forward. The public mind was seeking new levels. Much was being done in the name of liberty which was tyranny; much was branded tyranny which, did you take the husk from it, was bright with freedom. This Citizen Genêt, now: despite all that the Tories said about him, he was no brawler from the gutters, who had seized upon liberty as a means of hoisting himself upon the backs of other men. He had been brought up in the court of the French King; he was a man of letters, and a diplomat who 'd learned his trade in the capitals of Europe. Was it possible, and the little man asked this question earnestly of Anthony, that such a man would have taken the steps he had taken immediately upon setting foot in the United States unless he had been strongly advised? Would he have so flouted and disregarded all the desires and requirements of the American Government unless there had been an influence at work upon him, upon which he felt he could thoroughly rely? Some one must have assured him that the Government's protests were empty things, without body or meaning, and that, despite them, he could commission ships to sail against British commerce from our ports.

Who, asked Mr. Sparhawk, could have given these assurances? In whom, in this country, could Genêt have placed such complete confidence? Was it an American? It was not likely. Was it a Frenchman? That seemed nearer the fact.

“What Frenchman have you in mind?” asked Anthony keenly.

But this was a question which Mr. Sparhawk seemed in no haste to answer. And he said so; Anthony was a young man, and young men, he held, should work out their own opinions and lay the foundations for their own beliefs. But, for all that, and he tapped the scrolled lid of the snuff-box as he said this, he was not averse to what might be called a general suggestion. The adviser of Citizen Genêt was almost sure to be one who had known the republican minister in Europe—and one who was possibly concerned in shipping. Mr. Sparhawk nodded his head, quite convinced of this. But who the man was he could not say, and the head here was shaken with equal conviction. Of course, every one was entitled to privately hazard an opinion. No one could find fault with that. And he would not deny that he had hazarded his own. But he could say no more than this; if such a person, or persons, were to be found; if he, or they, could be induced to talk, a deal would be learned, much public villainy might be prevented, and the routing out of a burrow of rats that had given grievous private trouble might be begun.

Anthony nodded his bandaged head but said nothing. Mr. Sparhawk talked with care, blunting the point of each remark after it had entered, and leaving no salient thing upon which one might hang a definite meaning. When they had finished their wine, Anthony arose and bade him good day; and when on the street he turned in the direction of Rufus Stevens' Sons.

XXVII

AT the counting-room Charles greeted Anthony with a tight hand-clasp and said warmly:
“The villains! The infernal rogues! To strike you down and drag you aboard their dirty craft! We shall see to them before they have gone much further.”

In his own room, he sat in the corner of his sofa, nursing his lame foot, and urged Anthony to tell of his escape. As the young man carried the story forward, Charles's face, which had been white and worn, flushed, and his eyes shone with their old brightness; at the episode of the arms-room and that of Anthony's struggle with the captain and the two lieutenants, he flamed up, rocking to and fro on the sofa and chuckling rapturously. But when the picture on deck was thrown before him he got up and began to prowl the floor, his head back and his laughter filling the room; at the girl's being taken out of the schooner, his eyes were filled with tears, his arms were about Anthony's shoulders, he shook with mirth.

“By God!” he pronounced, “it was wonderful! I would have given anything to have seen it. Congreve, nor Webster, nor Kitt Marlowe himself, have n't a bit of comedy to equal it. It was perfect.”

During the afternoon Anthony was much noticed in the counting-room because of his bandaged head and the rather wavering account of his experiences which was going about; and at dusk Whitaker bore him away to a tavern for supper.

“Eat what you like,” was the dandy's reply to Anthony's protests; “and drink nothing at all if your stomach is not

in the way of it. But I must be seen in your company: the city is all agape at your adventures, and it will do me more good socially than the services of a dozen clever tailors."

They ate at the Crooked Billet, and all about there was a murmuring and nodding and a glancing from the corners of eyes; *Le Mousquet* was still hot on the city's tongue, and the man who had striven so with her company was a person to be seen and commented upon.

"What you did I don't know," said Whitaker. "Some have it that you boarded the vessel of your own free will and tried to capture her single-handed; others insist you were kidnapped, and swam ashore with the blackguards popping at you with small arms from the deck. And I've heard—though Heaven knows how such a tale got abroad—that a woman figured in the matter, that she 'd eloped with some jolly blade or other and you 'd taken it on yourself to get her back, but whether for her people's sake or your own the gossip does not state."

Anthony replied briefly to the chatter of his friend, and after a little Whitaker drifted to another subject. He split a pigeon in two and helped himself to the good hot bread as he said:

"There's your uncle now. Of late I can't get him out of my mind."

"And why not?" asked Anthony.

"He's changed," said Whitaker. "He's aged and failing in health. There's not the same stingo to him that there once was. And he hesitates. For the first time in his life, I verily believe, he hesitates."

"It's worriment that the new ship will not be launched in time," said Anthony.

"There's no need to worry about her," said Whitaker, "because she'll go into the water on the day he has fixed. No, it's something else."

Anthony was silent; Whitaker gave his attention to the food for a space, and then went on:

“These Bulfinches and their like are the devil’s crew. God help the man who’s beholding to them; they’ll sit about him until the commercial life is out of him, like vultures do, and then be on him and pick his bones.”

“Why do you speak of them?” asked Anthony.

“On two occasions, one of those damned twin brothers—I don’t know if it was Rehoboam or Nathaniel—visited your uncle; once I was sent to their den in Harmony Court, with a message. I have no wish to pry into any one’s affairs,” said Whitaker, “much less those of a man who employs and puts confidence in me; but my flesh crawls at thought of these people, and I wish I could get rid of the thought of them.”

“What message did you carry to Harmony Court?” asked Anthony.

“I don’t know,” said Whitaker; “but it was one that gave Charles Stevens little pleasure to send, and the Bulfinches, father and sons, a deal to receive. It came about in a peculiar way,” said the dandy. “Late one afternoon Tom Horn said to me that perhaps I’d better wait, as Mr. Stevens thought he’d have need of me. And so I did. The dusk came on; the light filling up the space under the door of your uncle’s room showed me he’d lighted the candles, and I could hear him limping up and down the floor as though he couldn’t keep still. Tom Horn was the only other person in the place; he had a candle at his elbow and was scratching away at some figures, and every once in so often he’d give me a look and screw up his face and shake his head. So I said to him, ‘What is it?’

“‘He said he’d never go to them,’ says Tom. ‘I’ve heard him say it many a time.’

“‘Go to whom?’ says I.

“‘To the money-brokers,’ says Tom. ‘To Harmony Court. To Bulfinch’s. So he means to send you.’

“But I could n’t believe it,” said Whitaker, “for what could any one want with a messenger to that rats’ nest if it was n’t on a matter of business? And what business could Rufus Stevens’ Sons have there?” Whitaker took up his tankard and whipped the ale about in it with a circular motion; then he drank deeply of it. “But in a half-hour, maybe, Charles called me in.” Whitaker put the tankard down and held up a hand as though in affirmation. “I never saw a man so deathly-looking; the sweat stood on his face and his eyes looked like the eyes of a very old man. He gave me a sealed paper and told me to take it to Amos Bulfinch at once. I said it was late, that I thought their place of business would be closed. But he laughed,—I never thought to hear a laugh that would chill me,” said Whitaker, “but that one did,—and he told me to have no fear; they’d be waiting.”

“And they were?”

“All three of them. The saintly father—whom the devil take!—and the virtuous sons—may they burn together!—sat and smiled and bade me welcome. They opened the sealed paper in an inner room; and afterwards Nathaniel came out with a second paper, also sealed, which he said was for Mr. Charles Stevens, and to whom it was to be delivered without delay. I did deliver it to him in his own place on Ninth Street, and I left him sitting with it unopened, and—shall I say it?—looking like a man broken and unstrung.”

It was after dark when Anthony left Whitaker and walked up Water Street to Christopher Dent’s. There was a light in the rooms above the apothecary’s; and there was a moving shadow thrown on the curtains, graceful, youthful, appealing, with soft gestures. Anthony sounded the knocker at the side door, and in a few moments he talked with her father

in the same room in which she had talked with Mr. Sparhawk some months before.

"You know who I am, so there's no need to go into that," said Anthony. "And I am here because there are matters between us which should be spoken of without delay."

Coldly polite, the old Frenchman indicated a chair, but Anthony said:

"Some of what I have to say concerns mademoiselle; would it be asking too much if I desired her presence?"

A few moments later she came into the room; Anthony met her proud, cold look with one steady and undisturbed. And he said:

"All day the city has been pulsing with certain news that's come in; no doubt you've heard, Monsieur Lafargue, how the schooner *Le Mousquet* has taken the American ship *Eclipse*."

Monsieur nodded, but was silent.

"Seizures have been expected of late," said Anthony; "for numbers of private armed ships, sanctioned by the French minister, Genêt, and provided with papers by him, have been operating in the waters round about." Anthony looked from the old man to the girl. "There are many who think the citizen is venturing far in these things," he said. "And there are a few who think rash advice is being given him—advice, indeed, that will lead to his undoing."

A lean, shaking hand went to Monsieur Lafargue's lips, and he coughed nervously.

"You have come here to say this?" he asked.

"In part, yes; but only in part." A few hours before, said Anthony, he had talked with a man, marked for his keenness, and it was this man's thought that the advice given Citizen Genêt had not originated with the person who gave it. The things done had been intemperate and unwise. The old head of Monsieur Lafargue was high held at this; his

eagle face looked cold and proud; but there was a tremor in the thin hands as they lay upon the arm of his chair. And he desired the young man to proceed.

Anthony called to mind the night at the Crooked Billet: mademoiselle remembered that? Monsieur did not forget? Mr. Tarrant had wanted to arrange a duel. A preposterous thing! And did monsieur know why he so desired this?

“A blow had been given,” said monsieur.

But why? A blow is seldom given except for cause. And there was cause enough behind this one, as monsieur would learn, if he cared to listen.

“In things that concern you personally, sir—” began Monsieur Lafargue, in his cold voice, but Anthony stopped him.

Let there be no misunderstanding of the matter, the young man requested, with the sharp, biting note that sometimes came into his voice; this was a concern of monsieur’s. It had more to do with monsieur than any one else in the world. And now would he hear it?

Monsieur signed, with a shaking hand, that he would.

Very well. In the telling, said Anthony, he must go back; he must start at Brest, and with the letter which monsieur had received from Magruder.

“Accursed letter!” said monsieur. “Accursed letter!”

It was Magruder’s communication which brought monsieur and mademoiselle across the ocean. Mademoiselle had said so. And, in light of this, monsieur might be interested to know that at the time he had received this writing at Brest Anthony had received another, much like it, at New Orleans; and from the same person. The call that had brought them from France had brought him north on the first ship he could get.

At this mademoiselle stirred in her chair; her eyes were eager; but Anthony spoke to her father.

The letter that summoned him, he said, was a furtive one;

it was plain that it came from a person of little courage. But, for all, there was that in it which compelled attention. No doubt monsieur had received much the same impression.

"When I first saw Magruder in his counting-room," said Anthony, "his vitals were knotted in dread. He feared for his money; he feared for it shamelessly. And he choked with the thought it 'd be found out he 'd given me warning. As I watched him," said Anthony, "I grew sick at him; never before had I seen such a frantic, tight-hearted, cowering wretch."

And then the New York packet. Monsieur, no doubt, recalled how he and mademoiselle had come ashore from her? And the circumstances? And the boisterous young man who made so free with their conveyance? Very good. Anthony had not expected to see the boisterous young man again. But he did see him. That night! And so monsieur and mademoiselle listened to the tale of the two men in the moonlight; of how one strode, laughing, away toward the river; and how the other had come into his room with much confident hectoring.

"This, monsieur," said Anthony, "was Tarrant. And while I do not care for him, overmuch, I'll say this for him: he is none of your mealy-mouthed ones. He directed me to leave the city—and at once; his talk was full of gibes and sneers. That is why I struck him."

"You have not yet said in what way all this concerns me," said Monsieur Lafargue.

Patience! A moment more. Anthony was now coming to that. Did monsieur mark what night this happened? The clock had just struck one. As far as it was possible to judge, Magruder had been done to death in his counting-room on the river front at about that hour. Note that the laughing man had gone in that direction at that time.

Monsieur Lafargue spoke in a voice that shook. He had

no doubt, he said, that more than one man had gone in that direction, at that hour, and on that same night, and innocently enough.

Anthony agreed. It might very readily be so. But which of them had the finger pointing at him this man had? Would monsieur join together the facts? Would he note that the desperate taking off of Magruder was of a piece with the orders Tarrant had given Anthony at the Half Moon? Did he not see that both grew from the same dark stem?

"I had received a warning," said Anthony. "And upon the heels of it came Tarrant with his threats. It was Magruder who gave me the warning; and, for it, Blake gave him his death."

Mademoiselle gasped. She had sat still, with her face averted; she now turned it, and Anthony saw that it was white, and her eyes wide with fear.

"Having seen to Magruder and done what they could with me, these ruffians then gave their attention to you, monsieur," said the young man. "You had not spoken to Magruder; nevertheless you were dangerous, for at any moment, upon the return of my uncle, you might go to him and frankly state your case. To them this might be very perilous, indeed. So they, in what manner I don't know, gained your attention. All the crimes of which they were guilty they placed at the door of Rufus Stevens' Sons. And the death of Magruder was one of these; for you, mademoiselle," turning to the girl, "had appealed to me; they feared what might come of this, and, to destroy any ground that might be between us, they charged that my hand had struck the blow."

They were a cunning and close-thinking crew! And, like all finished liars, they were careful to use a part of the truth. They had told her Anthony was seen coming from Ma-

gruder's at a quiet hour. This was true, mademoiselle. But had they given the hour a name? They had not said it was six o'clock in the morning, had they? They had not told her it was some five hours after she had found the man dead in his chair! And after this they did the thing that rendered monsieur and mademoiselle harmless. It was softly spread about that a woman was concerned in Magruder's death. Suspicion was lifting its head, so they had been told; mademoiselle's name was being whispered; there were grave fears for her safety. Both monsieur and mademoiselle must be very quiet. Were they not told that? They must be little seen; they must consult no one. Perhaps, in this way, the thing would spend itself, and die down. And so fear shut monsieur's mouth; and it placed mademoiselle in her enemies' hands.

Monsieur Lafargue said:

"If our presence in the city was a peril to these men, why was not this fear used to drive us away?"

"Was it not used to drive mademoiselle away?" asked Anthony. "Did I not find her on board *Le Mousquet*, flying from the phantom they raised in her mind?"

Again the shaking hand went to the lips of Monsieur Lafargue. And he said:

"But they did not desire *me* to be gone. And I wanted to. I longed to go back to France. But they begged me to remain."

"And why?" said Anthony. "I think, from what I've seen to-night in monsieur's manner, he has had some thoughts as to that."

Here the girl's arms went about her father as though to protect him.

"They had use for you, I think," said Anthony. "They had plans, had they not? And these plans mademoiselle did not altogether favor. Am I right? They wanted her

influence away. They desired you to be alone and unadvised." Monsieur Lafargue got up. His face was gray and drawn; his legs shook under him.

"At my years," said he, "the mind does not think directly. I may have been wrong in acting against your wish," to the girl; "but it was for France; it was for the republic, one and indivisible. Do not our enemies crowd the sea? Only a word was asked of me. It was a word that would launch a blow against the enemy. Could I withhold it?"

"Please, please!" said the girl, and the gentleness in her voice made Anthony marvel. "There is no one to blame you." Her arms were tightly about him. "No one *can* blame you!"

"Is it wrong to do a deed for one's country?" said monsieur. "If the fat bustards flock in the air, shall I not loose the hawks against them? If a man puts a weapon in my hand to use against the foes of France, am I to think that man a—"

He sagged here, and for an instant the girl held his weight; then Anthony carried him to a sofa and laid him carefully down.

"He is old," said the girl; "he is very old. And he is not strong." In a few moments, under her ministrations, he began to revive. She looked at Anthony. "He has been uneasy," she said, "and this was too much for him."

Anthony took up his hat, but at the head of the stairs he paused.

"I hope," said he, "that I have made certain things plain. And I urge you to close your mind to these people, for they are your enemies as they are mine."

And so he followed the quadroon maid down the stairs and went out of the house. For an hour or more he paced the streets, his mind full of the girl; and then he went home. The door of his room he found unlocked, which was not

usual. Inside there was the smell of burnt paper, the fire-place was choked with a blackened mass of ash; upon the floor lay the covers of some half-dozen of Rufus Stevens' Sons' old ledgers. The dates on the backs of them told Anthony they were of the period of Lucas and Carberry; and he sat down and stared dully at the ruin of that upon which he had counted so much.

XXVIII

CHARLES STEVENS stared when Anthony told him of the burning of the old ledgers. Then he smiled. "What matter?" said he. "It's a curious happening, to be sure; but let them go, and think no more of them."

Anthony put his hand on his uncle's arm.

"Through those books," said he, "I hoped to come at certain things that have been troubling this house."

"What things?" asked Charles. He wore a smiling lightness; but there was a sick look in his eyes.

"I don't know," said Anthony. "I can only hazard a guess." He regarded his uncle a moment, his hand still on his arm. "Up to this time I have never spoken to you directly," said he, "and I had not meant to until I had all the facts that it were possible to collect. But I ask you, now: has it never come into your mind that things here have not been well?"

"Nothing could come out of those old books but ghosts," said Charles. "Ghosts of old transactions, of old merchants, of old voyages. Shall we give time to such things now,—shadows, matters past and done,—when there is so much present substance to engage one's attentions? Let us fill our minds with the future, for the future has gifts to give, and all its days are unused. The past is dust. Let us close our eyes to it; let us put its sad corpses back into their graves." Charles patted Anthony on the back. "Come, now! You've spoken of this once; let that once be enough." He went to a cabinet, took out a decanter, and

poured out two brimming goblets of wine. "To the days ahead!" said Charles. "To the good days ahead: a sharp lookout, swift voyages, and rich cargoes!"

In the immediate days that followed this, Charles was more active than any one had ever seen him before. A fever of energy seemed to consume him; he tracked up and down the floor of his private room, his lame foot dragging, his brain glowing and planning; the letters he wrote went to the ends of the world. May passed. June came and spent its sunny days. And on one of these the *Rufus Stevens* slipped down the ways and into the water—a mighty ship, her hull dipping and bowing before hundreds. And how the workmen swarmed in her; how her masts reared when set in place; how wide and smooth and clean her deck was! What wondrous spaces were in the hold! What excellent quarters for'ard! What enormous yards and sails. And the goods that were stored in her! There seemed no end to it! And then she sailed away for the Far East, sail over sail, her bow cutting the water and piling it whitely about her. Charles and Anthony and Captan Weir left her outside the capes, and, from the deck of a sloop, saw her wing away into the depths beyond the ocean's curve.

"With wind and weather," said Charles, "she 'll dock in Calcutta in ninety days. And next spring, when the ice is well out, she 'll show her topsails in the river once again. And then," he slapped Anthony gleefully on the back, "I 'll engage to surprise you. Such a cargo as she 'll carry you 'll never have seen before. I 'll make their eyes pop," said Charles extravagantly, his own snapping with expectation. "There has never been any merchandizing in this port that could properly be called such. Small ships make narrow markets; trade has been undernourished. But with vessels like the *Rufus Stevens* we 'll mark a change; we 'll come to our due now, swiftly enough."

In the days that followed this, Charles fitted back into his old habits and ways. He was cheerful and easy; he ceased walking the floor; he sat in the corner of his sofa and dreamed; he talked with confidence of the great gull of a ship, pushing eastward around the world. He loved the idea of her return. That day was to be one of amazements; strange lights were to be in the sky; the ship, as though manned by genii and sailing out of enchanted seas, was to appear suddenly, magnificently laden. What was to result was like the providence of a young and generous god; wharves and warehouses were to be showered with extraordinary stuffs.

Charles touched this picture with a new color each day; and every touch seemed to fit him more snugly into his old groove. Each sad corpse, of which he had spoken to Anthony, had been buried deep, and its dull woe had been buried with it. He took his old, careless hold upon the business; he gave unusual orders in a casual way; he chuckled over the pages of "Tom Jones"; he voyaged with his robust old mariners; he laughed with the dramatists of the Restoration. Fear fell from him.

July, hot, wearing, lowering, drew its length through the port; and out of the steam and stink of it a terror grew and took shape. Among the islands, the Barbados distemper lifted its head. But it had done this in every hot season in the memory of living men, and so no attention was paid to it. A ship brought its poisonous essence into the port; several persons died of it along the waterfront; but still no heed was given. Many people whom it touched had died at various times; it was a thing to be expected. And so, ghostly and furtive and purposeful, the thing crept on its million feet, and took hold with its million hands. August came in, even hotter than July. Dock Creek, ill favored, filled with market sloops, threw up a steam; at low tide the

accumulated filth in the city docks poured poison into the air; carcasses of animals rotted in the streets.

"Nine dead this week," said Christopher Dent. "Inflamed eyes, rough tongues, aching heads, hot skins, at first; then the whites of the eyes turned yellow, free bleeding at the nose, black vomit, and death in eight days with the body turned purple. 'Tis the Barbados monster come freshly among us."

A stout old man in a wig, and with a walking-staff and varnished boots, who stood at the counter in the apothecary's shop, smiled at this.

"Let him grimace as he will," said he. "He 'll frighten none but the old women. We know him, and have measured the lengths he can go."

"Nine dead in a week," said Christopher Dent. "That 's a deal, Dr. Blue."

"It is nothing," said the physician. "You have your mind fixed on it, and so it seems important. As many will die in the same time of the bloody-flux, and you 'll never say a word." Having transacted his business, Dr. Blue grasped his staff firmly and prepared to go. "But if it advance," said he, with stout assurance, "we know how to meet it. The letting of a little blood takes the venom out of these disorders fast enough; and where the lancet will not do a purge will act in its stead. After all," said the doctor, "the pill of aloes and white soap is the final defense of mankind."

After he had gone Christopher turned to Tom Horn.

"I have noticed," said he, "that fat men always talk like that. Little can disturb their confidence. Nevertheless," and he shook his head, "I look to see much trouble from this visitation."

"Of a night," said Tom Horn, "there is a thickness in the air—a warm, slippery thickness such as I 've noticed in hot countries in time of pestilence. And the dawn breaks yel-

low across the Jerseys. I've seen it many a morning of late from my window; people are going about with dread in their faces, and every man looks oddly at his neighbor."

The next week seven only died; and those who were disposed to take the threat lightly, smiled and wore tolerant looks.

"Seven dead," said Christopher, as he looked up from a mortar in which he was grinding some bark; "but do you take heed to those who are ill? There are more poor people tossing on hot beds to-night with yellow death sitting beside them than have ever done so in this region before."

Anthony spoke to Dr. King across the physician's table.

"From time to time this distemper takes a great toll of lives in New Orleans," said he. "And there's little done to fight it back, except bitter drafts and things that are a deal like witchcraft."

Dr. King looked serious.

"We practise equal follies here," said he. "Blood has always run to propitiate the demons in time of pestilence; and we are still calling for it. Only to-day I heard of a man who had been bled five times between dawn and sun-down, to drain the venom of the complaint from his system. But, I suppose, if the disease mounts, these things must go their course; after they've failed we can have the filth of the town buried or burned, and bring some degree of sanity into practise."

So each day the city's surgeons proudly flashed their lancets; blood ran into basins in every household; the sick were given slimy, bitter drinks; not a stir of air was permitted in their chambers. Outdoors the heat poured down on the rotting masses in docks and byways; street by street the beleaguering pestilence took the town. The church-bells began to toll early of a morning; at first there were little spaces between their ringing; then the spaces closed up—

filled in; the tolling grew constant—never ceasing. It was death sounding in the citizen's ear; and death met his eye in the funeral cortèges that darkened the streets.

The roads leading from the town were filled with vehicles and people on foot, carrying bundles of belongings, all in flight before the pestilence. Those who kept in the city lighted fires in the streets, as the smoke and flame were said to have a killing effect on the plague. The burning of gunpowder was universally recommended; fowling-pieces, muskets, small ordnance, holster pistols, barked and roared and stuttered through the storm of bells, and the smoke of the fires. Tobacco was cherished as a foe to the disease by many, and was smoked and snuffed in quantities; garlic was considered unfriendly to the thing and was chewed and kept in the pockets and placed in the shoes; pitch was set alight in fire-shovels and carried smoking through dwellings to drive out the possible presence.

"I cling to it," said Christopher Dent, as he labored in his laboratory, distilling and compounding the cures and preventatives most in demand, "that camphor is the most efficient and harmless agent in treatment of this disorder; unctuous, pellucid, bitterly aromatic, if inhaled it overcomes the poisons of the fever, and has a cooling effect upon the brain and blood."

"Many keep to a remedy discovered by four French thieves," said Tom Horn. "These villains went about among the sick and dead while the plague ravaged Marseilles some years ago, never catching the disorder. When taken in their plundering they said the medicine had kept it from them, and bartered the secret for their liberty."

"Rogues who would rob the dead would lie with little remorse," said Christopher. "And the thing is but a vinegar sprinkled upon the clothes. It may have a certain

virtue, but I doubt the method of its use; to do good a medicine must be drunken, or inhaled directly, or taken up through the pores of the body. However, if a man comes to my shop who has faith in *vinaigre des quatre voleurs*, I make it for him quickly, and of good materials."

The number of people who left the city as the pestilence advanced was large; among them were government officials and doctors of medicine, whose fear was greater than their sense of duty. So thick was the flying horde along the roads that the outlying villages and towns were stirred with fright; sentinels were posted, weapons in their hands, to stem the advance. New York, in a panic, refused to allow the stricken port's shipping to come up to the city, forbade coaches to run between the two places, and appointed a day of fasting and prayer. The highways were abandoned by commerce; the mails were discontinued; armed guards were stationed at all the ferries, and patrolled the waterfronts.

What physicians were left in the city were worked to desperation: nurses of character could not be had; and the friendless sick fell into the hands of the reckless, drunken, and depraved. The hospital at Bush Hill was gorged with the stricken; loathsome wretches made sport of burying the dead. And, as the gates of doom seemed folding back, fanatics made haste in coming forward, lifting their doleful voices as they came. Woe! woe! unto the wicked! As the cities of the plain had withered under the anger of the Almighty, so would this city on the river. Its sins had been many; it had given itself to lechery, to strong drink, and to following after idols; it had lusted after women, after gold; evil desires had burned shameful letters into its forehead; it had been strong in its wickedness, and had looked at righteousness with a face of brass. And now it was stricken; evil had come upon it. Woe! Sorrow to the sinner caught

in the day of his sin, and the strength of his passion. Heavy was the hand of the Almighty: dreadful was the day when an answer was asked, and none could be given!

As the infection grew and the customary remedies failed, one by one, the protests of Dr. King, of Charles Stevens, and other forward-looking men began to be heeded. The streets and open gutters were cleaned and flushed, pestilential pits were filled in, rotting accumulations were burned. The ceaseless tolling of bells, keeping death ever before the eyes of the sick, was stopped; the solemn-pacing funeral processions, which frightened the public mind, were forbidden; the burning of street-fires, the exploding of muskets were put an end to, for the mental states they brought about could not but feed fresh lives to the plague. The dead were now buried in the still of the night, and no bells marked their going to their graves; the glare of the fires and rattling of shots no longer frightened the timid.

The hospital established for the poor was an old mansion on the outskirts of the city; here, so the thought was, beds were to be had, also food and nurses, and physicians were to be frequently in attendance. Anthony had heard of it during the days and nights which he spent striving to ease the suffering of the desperately circumstanced; but he had had no time to pause for facts. The young man's experience with the same malady at New Orleans had taught him many shrewd ways of meeting it; and his money went in medicines and in food the sick could eat. But after a month of this he felt his strength going; and his nerves were shaken. The number of his charges had grown enormously; he could not take care of them all; so he spoke of Bush Hill.

But they cried out in fright! Any suffering, but not that place! Any death, uncared for, unthought of, but not Bush Hill! So, frowning, surprised, Anthony went to the place to look and see.

It was night; few people were abroad; the death-carts, lighted by torches in the hands of men walking ahead, trundled through the streets; at each door marked with the dreaded sign a sad, wrapped form was thrust out and thrown into the vehicle with its fellows in death. Torches glimmered in the potter's-field; as the young man passed; dim figures were digging, digging; the place was scarred as by a plow.

Anthony approached Bush Hill across the fields; a veil of insects hummed in the glare from its open windows; a stench seemed to drip from it; now and then the roar of drunken carnival came from its recesses. He went in. The sick were huddled on dirty straw, filthy, abandoned, terrible in the smoky lamplight; they moaned and called for water; they raved and babbled and cursed in their utter wretchedness. The awful dead, stark and neglected, were on every side.

"In God's name!" said Anthony.

At his feet a woman was gasping: she was a Spanish woman; she held tightly to a brass crucifix, and called upon angels and saints, upon glorious martyrs and confessors to see her die. O immaculate heart of God! Most holy and exalted Virgin! Cherubim! Pillars of high heaven! Shining archangels! A naïve paradise was strewn about her in the filth; the way of death was ranked with the holy, gathered to watch her pass.

"Water!" A man lifted himself out of the dirty straw. "If there's a human heart in this place, and a hand that's able to give it—water!"

A woman moved forward with a cup; after the man had drunk she eased him back, and, as she turned, Anthony saw it was Mademoiselle Lafargue.

"Here!" said he, startled.

"Some one must do it," she said.

“Are there no nurses?”

The roar of drunken carnival lifted from the recesses of the buildings; shrieks of laughter and screamed curses rose with it.

“Those are the nurses,” she said. “None would risk death but them; and they are here not to care for the sick but to eat and drink what has been given for the comfort of the sick.”

“How long have you been here?”

“I come for a time each day, but I am able to do very little.”

Anthony looked about at the piteous horror of the place.

“I wonder,” he said, “that you have been able to do anything. It seems beyond human help.”

During the last few weeks, while he was working himself deeper and deeper into the rotting heart of the plague, he caught the flitting of another, on ahead of him, who was giving of strength and spirit, and who was followed by blessings. Then the name came to him, back along the way she had gone, and a comfort had soothed him, an exaltation had stirred his heart. Then one night they met in a place of death, and he had marveled at the courage in her face, the readiness of her hands. A second time he met her, again in the night, and heard her plead with the brutal drivers of the death-carts for reverence for the dead; once in the potter’s-field he had taken the spade from her hands, and finished the shallow grave she had been digging for a dead child.

And now, as he stood talking with her in the pest-house, there arose a voice.

“In the garret, my dear sons,” it said. “I must lie in the garret; that is the place I like best.”

A bent, withered old woman, whom Anthony had noted prowling among the sick, muttering and chuckling, paused

beside the man's bed; her long, discolored teeth showed in a kind of horrid glee as she looked down at him.

"So you 'd like the garret, would you, my gentleman?" she said. "The garret of that little place which you have kept so close all these years? So would I. I 'd like to lie there, too. God's truth, I would. It 'd be a rare place to ransack; I 'd love, sir, to go about in it."

The man tried to arise; but he could not.

"Where is Rehoboam? Where is Nathaniel?" he asked. "Where are my sons?"

The old woman cackled.

"Now, there are the shrewd ones for you," she said. "There is the careful pair. Down at the door, outside, they put you; and away with them, as hard as they could pelt!"

The old man closed his eyes and began to mutter.

"It is nothing, my sons. Nothing at all. Have I not had pains in the head before? The plague will not enter my house. No, no! There is no gorging and stuffing and high living here. And so there is nothing to attract it."

"Gorging and stuffing," said the hag, her yellow teeth showing all the more. "Not enough food has gone into that house in a year to keep a pigeon fat a fortnight."

"The garret is high," said the old man. "It 's well out of reach, and airy, and cool. From there I can watch the wind blow the smoke from the chimneys, and see the weather-vanes turn, and the flags fly from the mast tops. So put me in the garret, Nathaniel. And draw the cupboard near to my bed."

"Ha, ha!" said the old woman. "The cupboard!"

"And the chest, Rehoboam; place the chest where I can reach it. Beside my bed. And then I will sleep; and to-morrow I will be well."

"To-morrow," said the old woman, "you 'll be with the

worms. And you 'll give them no joy, either; for there 'll be spare picking, indeed, on the like of you."

"Who is this?" asked Anthony, as he moved toward the bed.

"This, sir," said the hag, "is old Bulfinch. He 's a usurer by trade, and now lies here rotting of the fever."

"Is he badly off?" asked the young man.

"I would not care to be as badly," said the crone. "I 've seen men better off than he die like that," and she puffed out her breath. "But *he* 'll not die readily. Oh, no; he 's one of the kind whose claws are sunk into life. He has cupboards and chests to anchor him to the world, has this gentleman; and, if all the tales you hear are true, they 'll be rare, heavy bits of furniture, indeed." She chuckled and wagged her ancient head. "They 'd be a fine sight for famished eyes, those two things," she said. "And I wish it were given to me to open them. Gold," she said. "And silver. Bags of it. Spanish and Dutch and British pieces, as broad as your hand. He was a sharp-nosed one for minted bits of metal, was old Bulfinch. Chests and cupboards stuffed with them. God save us! And, for all, here we have him, with yellow-jack pinched tight in his bowels."

"And his sons brought him here, you say?"

"They did; in a cart; and in the night. And they pitched him down by the door, and stayed hardly long enough for a word."

"I 'll lie in the garret, Nathaniel," persisted the old man. "I 'll lie in the garret, where it 's airy and cool. I 'll be quiet there, and the pain in my head will leave me."

The hag chuckled gleefully.

"What, my gentleman," she said, "would you be where you 'd stop the brisk snapping of locks, the opening of drawers, the throwing back of chest-lids? Out on you for a spoil-sport! Some one else counts your money to-night,"

she said. "Your noble sons have the handling of your broad, fine, bright pieces. I can see them settling to it now like a pair of weasels."

The clouded mind of the sick man sensed only a little of what she said.

"Plenty of room in the chest," he muttered. "Oh, yes, plenty of room for more. The years and years it takes to gain a very little. The weary years."

The old woman held a candle so that the light could fall on his face.

"There will be no more years for you," she said. "Hours will tell your tale." She nodded toward Anthony. "And short hours, too."

"It's a deep chest," said old Bulfinch. "As deep as a ship." Gradually a look of glee came into his face; his hands opened and shut covetously. "A fine ship," he said. "A tall ship; and with the old man's name painted on her. Such spaces she has for storing goods. Such wide, wonderful spaces! There is the room of a town in her. She went away grandly," he said. "Like a bride, all in white. And when she returns, what a dowry she'll bring! There will be magnificence! There will be splendor! Her cargo will be a jewel, and her oaken hull the casket." He gloated over this for a space; and then a trouble began to show. "If it were not Gorman, now," he said. "If it were not Gorman that is to step aboard her at Calcutta. We could trust Hollister. He is sound and tried. But he's done too much. Oh, yes, far too much to be safe; for there are sharp eyes watching; there are minds, too, that are like knife-blades, and they are thinking, always thinking."

Anthony's eyes met those of Mademoiselle Lafargue; but before either could speak there came the choking shriek:

"Water! One drop to cool my throat! Water, for God's love!"

"Hold your tongue!" said the old woman, lowering evilly at the sufferer. "It 's always something with you. There 's not enough water in the river to fill your gullet; so ease yourself back, and be still."

The French girl gave the sick man a cup of water; and while she was doing so old Bulfinch stirred uneasily.

"Nathaniel," he said, "are you there? Rehoboam, my son, where are you? I am not sick. The doctor is a fool. I am well and strong. It is true I have a pain in my head, and the hot sun has got into my blood. But I am not sick. The doctors are all frightened. Do not listen to them. They know nothing. By and by," and he laughed with a ghastly assumption of lightness, "this one will say I have the plague. It would be like him. Turn him away, Nathaniel; do not listen to him. And do not pay him money for his folly; it is waste, my sons, and money is hard to get. Take me to the garret; it will be quiet there, and I 'll be up and strong in another day. Be careful, Nathaniel; lift me gently, and see to the stairs, Rehoboam; they are crooked and treacherous." There was a pause, and sudden panic seemed to seize him. His eyes stared, and his jaws fell open; he clawed about in the straw, and then, with sudden power, rose up. "No, no!" he raved. "Not here! Not this place of death! My curse on you, Nathaniel, if you leave me; my blood and death on you, Rehoboam, if you give me into the hands of these wretches!"

Shriek after shriek came from him; then he fell back with a foam about his lips and his eyes full of fear and loathing.

With the blood pounding in his head, Anthony took made-moiselle by the arm.

"Come, let us go," said he.

And he led her out, and across the hot, moon-bathed fields, toward the city.

XXIX

WEEEKS went by; the plague drew its horrible length along the river, through the town's by-ways, through the unsunned huddled places, through creeks and docks and open gutters, through wells and cisterns and cesspools; and all its attendant horrors followed in ghastly procession. Death no longer stooped, hawk-like; it settled heavily down beside its victim as a vulture settles, filthy, evil, cold.

From the night of their meeting at Bush Hill, Anthony and Mademoiselle Lafargue saw a deal of each other; there were no words said, no compact made; but the fights which both were pressing were paired, and the good they had been able to accomplish was greatly multiplied. Seeing this, others added their help; Bush Hill was cleansed of its villainies; aid was carried into neglected quarters. The group became compact and strong; others, like it, sprang up; a wall of resolution began to rear itself in the path of the pestilence—a wall behind which fear and superstition died.

Those who had fled weeks before watched and waited from the heights beyond the city. Over the point of land between the two rivers, upon which the city had been built, they saw a bank of vapor hanging; and gradually the belief spread that in this was contained the essence of the plague. Frightened eyes watched it. If a wind stirred the trees on the hillsides, the refugees were up, thrilling with dread. In what direction did it blow? Was it from the city? What if it got under the poisonous mist and lifted it toward them?

After all, were they quite safe? Would it not be better if they traveled north toward the higher hills?

At Rufus Stevens' Sons, as at other mercantile houses, things were at a stop. Charles was seldom there; at times he might be found in a deep sleep on a sofa at his house on Ninth Street; but his waking hours were spent among the sick. What little business stirred was taken care of by Captain Weir, who came punctually to the counting-house each day; Whitaker was gone, having been one of the first to leave the city; Griggs and Twitchell, men of family both, kept themselves close to their homes and ventured nowhere. But Tom Horn came. As regularly as day dawned, he was up, and cooked himself a meager breakfast at his lodgings in Pump Court, and then off to Rufus Stevens' Sons in Water Street, and the ledgers, and the day's doings. The river was full of craft which had been forbidden to sail; hand-barrows and horse-drawn vehicles had disappeared from the streets during the day; the people met with were few; they passed furtively, and at as great a distance as possible for fear of contagion. Tom would take down the shutters, for the porters, too, were gone; then he'd take the books from the chest in which they were kept and put them upon the tall desk, and look at the clock.

"Five in the morning," he'd say, "and it might as well be the dead of night for all the movement there is. Indeed, the night has more stir, what with the death-carts and the calling of the ghouls that manage them."

At seven o'clock Captain Weir would come in, and nod to Tom.

"All's still well with you?" he'd ask.

"Still well," Tom would reply. "And you?"

"So far—brisk enough."

"Pump Court is a healthy place," said Tom. "There have

been but twelve carried from it so far. But it may be that I 'm too spare of body for the pestilence to bother with."

"It may be," said Captain Weir. "But take care."

"Just over the way from me," said Tom, "there was a fat man lodging, a great, strong fellow with thews like a bull, and a red face as broad as a bucket. He was a most excellent feeder; I 've seen him cutting into joints of beef in eating-places in a most astonishing way."

"One can't keep away the yellow-boy by gorging," said Captain Weir.

"Of a morning," said Tom Horn, "he 'd shave himself at an open window, and bellow songs out into the court. And he 'd thump himself on the chest and defy the plague to harm him. 'The cart is not made,' said he, 'that 'll carry *me* away in the night. When the scourge gets me, the city might well sit back on its haunches and take fear. For when I go what chance have the others? Here 's solidness for you,' he says, and he thumps away at himself; 'here 's guts and brawn! I 'd like to see the plague that 'll set itself to choking up *my* vitals. I 'll have a surprise waiting for it.' "

"Ah," said Captain Weir. "A surprise."

"The surprise came," said Tom Horn. "But it was for the fat man. The plague worked very quietly; but it made an end of him in two days. And when the cart came for him, it was quite an old one; it had been made many years. And I marked, as it rolled with him out of the court in the light of the torches, that the city was very quiet. For all his fatness, his brawn, and his blood, there was nothing unusual. He was but a man, the same as others; if the grave-makers were forced to make the pit a little wider to let him in, that was the only difference."

It was the day they talked about the fat man in Pump Court that visitors came to the counting-room, the first in

many a day; and the visitors were Rehoboam and Nathaniel Bulfinch. They entered together, and stepped toward Tom together; their gaunt, gangling frames were alike, as were their outstanding ears and the large spaces between their teeth, and the same eager, covetous look was in both their faces.

"It is refreshing to see a place of business open in times like these," said Nathaniel. "But I knew Rufus Stevens' Sons would be. Your pushing merchant does not permit an unfortunate state of public mind to step into his path."

"As we were coming down the street," said Rehoboam, "I said to Nathaniel, 'Brother, I am sure Rufus Stevens' Sons will be open and thriving as usual.' It is not for nothing," and Rehoboam showed all the spaces between his teeth in a wide smile, "that this business has earned such approval in the community."

Tom Horn did not speak; he sat on his long-legged stool, and looked at them, as a man might look at a pair of corbies that had thrust themselves upon his attention.

"You are Mr. Horn," said Nathaniel, grinning engagingly; "Mr. Horn, who has been with the house so long. Faithful service, sir, will be rewarded. Oh, yes, sooner or later, it will be rewarded. That is a rule that has never failed." He looked about and asked, "Where is Mr. Charles?"

"I don't know," said Tom Horn.

"He has not gone away!" said Nathaniel hastily. "Oh, no. *He* would not be afraid of the plague."

"He is still in the city," affirmed Rehoboam. "He has been seen more than once of late, in the street, and working with the grave-makers in the potter's-field."

"I have not said he had gone away," answered Tom Horn. "I have said, I do not know where he is; and no more do I."

"Very well," said Nathaniel. "It does not matter. We may see Captain Weir, I suppose?"

"You may," said Tom Horn, "if he is willing."

It proved that the captain was, and the twins, gangling, grinning, vulture-like, went into the room where he sat.

"We were quite sure we 'd find you at your post," said Rehoboam. "No matter what the day, or who be absent, we knew you 'd be at hand."

"Sit down," said Weir, and he said it coldly. And when they had done so, he added, "What is your errand?"

"A trifle," said Nathaniel. "Only a trifle." He coughed behind his hand and looked at Rehoboam. It was Rehoboam who spoke.

"It may, or may not, have come to your attention," said he, "but in the past half-year Mr. Charles Stevens has had some dealings with our house. A number of times—how often was it, brother?" appealing to Nathaniel.

"Four times," said Nathaniel. "Exactly four."

"Just four," Rehoboam told Captain Weir. "I like to be quite correct. Four times in the past half-year, Mr. Charles Stevens requested us to come here; we did so, and each time a transaction was entered in our books."

"He borrowed money of your father," said Captain Weir; "I know that."

"The bills," said Rehoboam, "were dated some few months or so apart. Of course," and he grinned at Captain Weir most calculatingly, "our calling here to-day is the merest form—"

"It means nothing at all," said Nathaniel.

"But, now that we are here," said Rehoboam, "it will do no harm, I think, to say that the first of the bills will be due in three days' time."

"No difficulty is expected," said Nathaniel. "Such a thing has not entered our minds. But clerks will sometimes make mistakes; they will sometimes forget—"

Captain Weir stopped them.

"All the firm's transactions have been had with your father," said he. "When you return to your counting-house, have the goodness to mention that I'd like a word with him, in confidence."

The twins grinned, first at Weir and then at each other. Then Rehoboam said:

"These are times, Captain Weir, when we can speak with little assurance of any one. Those who are here to-day are gone to-morrow. And those who—"

Weir frowned at him.

"Speak plainly," he said.

"The pestilence spares none," said Rehoboam. "When once it marks them out, it does its work quickly. Our father is dead."

"Dead," said Nathaniel, "and his property—" then, hastily, "what little he left—has come to us."

"Also," said Rehoboam, "his business, and his bills. Rufus Stevens' Sons, Captain, now deals with his heirs and assignees. And in three days, as I've said, the first bill comes due. Of course there will be no delay here," he grinned. "We have expected none."

"Of course," said Nathaniel, his jaws agape, mirthfully. "To be sure."

"We are at Harmony Court until six each day," said Rehoboam. "And we shall await a communication. In the meantime," and he got up, "good day to you. And be careful of your health," as he and his brother were about to go. "Do not venture where there is no necessity."

"Upon no account do so," said Nathaniel earnestly. "One never knows what may come of a rashness. Spend nothing needlessly, neither health nor money. That is the course of wisdom, sir."

Captain Weir walked the floor when they had gone; his eyes shone as hard as agates and his mouth set wickedly. The

old man dead! Well, that was an unexpected turn. And now here were these two harpies with bills in their hands, about the doors, promising ruin to the fairest of prospects for profit.

"I 'll take them by the throats first," said the captain. "I 'll squeeze the breath from them."

He took up his hat and went out; there was a coach-house in Mulberry Street, and to this he made his way straight, and was greeted by a mournful-looking man, in boots with yellow tops.

"Duff," said Captain Weir, "I want a man to carry a message to the Brig Tavern, below Chester."

The mournful man shook his head.

"Riders are scarce. They can't be had for love nor money; even the mails are left uncarried. The sentries are very watchful on the roads; and more than one person has been fired upon trying to win by."

Captain Weir chinked some gold coins in his pocket; and a sandy, foxy youth, stretched out upon a feed-box, lifted his head.

"I never saw anything that would n't be ventured if the pay was heavy enough," said the captain. "Here you, sir, what 's your price?"

The sandy youth grinned wisely, and puckered his narrow forehead.

"What 'll you say to twenty gold dollars?" said he.

"I 'll say it 's a deal of money," said Captain Weir. "But, nevertheless, I 'll pay it. Can you start at once?"

"In a half-hour," promised the sandy one, now briskly on his feet.

Captain Weir went into the coach-house and wrote his letter; when he came out with it in his hand he found a likely-looking horse ready saddled, and the man standing beside it.

“To be delivered to either of the two persons whose name is written here,” said Weir. “And, now, all haste; your money will be waiting you when you return.”

As the captain went back to the counting-house, the sky was becoming overcast; a trace of chilliness was in the air. Weir was not the only one to mark the change; for scores of lips muttered prayers that it might be the end of the summer's heat, that the chill in the air might lower the death-rate, that a frost might come whose touch would end the course of the plague. Toward nightfall the wind rose; rain began to fall. It was still falling and the wind was still blowing when Captain Weir started for his house in Shackamaxon; when he reached there a gale had set in; he could see the river creaming under its whip, and heard the hissing and complaining among chimney-pots and ships' rigging; the rain drove smartly before the wind in steadily increasing volume. Captain Weir threw off his cloak and boots; a servant had lighted a small fire in his sitting-room, and here a glass of brandy, hot and spiced, was given him; and he sat down and sipped it slowly.

His house was one of the period of George I, and excellently conceived; it stood on a knoll overlooking the river while behind it and to the south and north were green, level fields and clumps of spreading trees. Captain Weir's sitting-room was a comfortable place, high-ceilinged, with polished floor and broad, deep chairs; upon the walls were some prints that told of a taste in such things; a few pieces of Eastern bronze stood on a shelf between two windows.

In the sudden turn of the weather the fire was most desirable, and Captain Weir sat beside it and sipped at the glass of spiced brandy with appreciation. But all the time there was a frown upon his brow, the same that had come

upon it at the visit of the two Bulfinches, and it was plain to see that his mind still remained fixed to the things the two had said and the things these sayings promised.

After a long time spent thinking, and sipping at his drink, the captain's supper was served in another room; this he ate in silence and slowly. Afterward a bottle of port was placed upon a small table at his elbow as he resumed his seat at the fire; he smoked a Spanish cheroot, and between-times let the fine, thick flavor of the wine rest upon his tongue. He smoked and drank and thought; then he arose, took a key from his pocket, and unlocked a cupboard. Inside was a chest, small, bound with copper, and riveted strongly; this was also unlocked, and from it he took a quantity of papers and a parchment-bound book. Drawing up a table to the fire he sat down to the papers and the book, an ink-pot and pen at hand; and after a long study of the papers, and a vast scribbling of figures upon the backs of old letters, he made a single entry in the book, which he at once closed and sat tapping while he looked, smiling quietly, into the fire. He remained this way for a long time; the clock, which had been ticking sturdily in one corner, now struck ten; he arose, put away the papers and the book, locked both the chest and the cupboard, and then fell to pacing the floor. The storm had increased in violence; the wind whistled keenly about the ends of the house; now and then it came plunging down the chimney, making the fire leap and roar; the rain, driven in sheets, streamed down the window-panes and fell from the eaves like a cascade. Suddenly through the sounds of the storm came a rhythmic beat; Captain Weir halted in his pacing and listened. The beat grew nearer; there was a sudden rush of iron-shod hoofs upon the stone pavement at his door, the voices of men, and then a loud and incessant *rat-tat-ing* at the knocker.

Weir smiled quietly and seemed well pleased; the front door opened and closed; and then his servant appeared.

"Two gentlemen, sir," said the man.

"Ask them to come in," said Weir.

In a moment Tarrant and Blake came into the room: their hats and cloaks streamed with water; their boots were splashed with mud. Motioning to the servant to take the dripping things from his visitors and draw chairs up to the fire, Captain Weir said:

"A blustering night to be out, gentlemen."

Tarrant regarded him with hostile eyes.

"We were snug enough at the Brig," said he, "and were content enough to stay there."

"I am sorry," said Weir quietly.

"The roads ran water enough to float a long-boat," said Blake.

"If I am unfortunate enough to call you out in a storm," said the captain, "I can, at least, give you a fire, and some food and drink. They may keep its rigors from fastening upon your bodies."

The two men sat down; brandy was brought, and some plates of hot bread, and potted hare, and cold meats. They ate and drank, and this, together with the fire, quieted them. At their third glass, Captain Weir said:

"Of course, I'd a deal rather have chosen a more comfortable time; but, as matters have shown themselves, I had no choice and was forced to ask your presence at once."

Tarrant, glass in hand, looked at the speaker; and there was still a glint of his first mood in his eye.

"There have been a few occasions," said he, "when you all but had us here without your asking."

Captain Weir raised his brows; Blake laughed and said to him:

"A half-dozen times in the past year he has been for

putting a pistol to your ribs. It was all I could do to persuade him."

Weir said nothing, but looked at Tarrant, his brows still up.

"Was there a lack of cause for the desire?" said Tarrant.

"I could name you five reasons," giving Weir's look back steadily, "for each separate impulse. But we'll speak of the last one only."

"It will save time," said Weir composedly.

"Why," demanded Tarrant, "when the whole city was up and bleating in the matter of the French letters of marque, must you put yourself forward in it? We were your friends, yet you spoke to our discredit early and late. Mortal foes could n't have suffered worse because of you."

"I had warned you all in that matter," said Weir coldly. "I pointed out the state of the public mind. I showed you as plainly as any ready men need be shown that no good could come of the venture in the long run. If it had concerned yourselves only, you could have pressed it to any conclusion you saw fit; but, as I knew, I, too, would be involved in any mischance, and, as it was plain that you meant to give no heed to my sayings, I moved in the matter myself. It was I who made it impossible for you to carry it any further. Wait!" as Tarrant was working into a bitter speech; "one word more, so that I may be sure you understand what the situation was. If your plan had carried, we three, instead of sitting here at our ease, would be at this minute swinging from gibbets on Windmill Island."

Tarrant caught his breath and sank back in his chair. Blake crossed his legs, lifted a new-filled glass, and said:

"All gibbets behind us, Captain! And to the devil with the hangman!"

"I did not believe in this adventure from the first, and so told you," said Weir. "However, there are those of

another sort," with a nod of his head, "which a man of my growing years can approve of—a surer profit and a lesser hazard."

Tarrant, attracted by the tone and manner of Weir, valued him with a steady look. Then he looked at Blake; the free-booter shifted to a more comfortable position in his chair. But neither spoke.

"Have more of the brandy," said Captain Weir. "It's thought to be excellent. One of our captains brought it with him on his last visit to France. It was taken from the cellar of a nobleman's house, while its unfortunate owner was being taken from his library."

The liquor shone, a fine amber, in the glasses; but Tarrant did not touch it.

"So," said he, "there is another matter going forward?"

Captain Weir admired the color of the brandy, holding it against the candle-light.

"Yes," said he.

"And, as seems usual of late, it has been kept from me."

Again Weir nodded.

"I have been very careful to do so," he said coldly. "For it is a matter that needs patience; and you long ago convinced me that you have little of that."

Tarrant arose; his look was threatening and bitter.

"By God," he said. "Am I a chuckle-head? Am I to be put aside whenever you feel so disposed? Am I to be used as though I had no brains in my skull?"

He stood over Weir, his face white with passion. But Weir did not move; the cold green eyes glinted like agate, and when he spoke his voice was level.

"Some day," he said, "when you insist on interfering with my way of dealing with matters, I'll crack your skull with a bullet; then we shall see if it holds the brains you boast of."

Tarrant seemed on the point of leaping upon him; but Blake leaned forward and shook a warning finger.

"Sit down," he said unemotionally. "Are we not friends and co-laborers? Sit down."

But Tarrant's lips curled back from his teeth like a dog's.

"Do you think," he said to Weir, "I don't know it was I who stood out in all the dirty weather, while you rode safe in shelter? I've struck the blows you've planned; and I've taken the hard, open word from all who cared to give it, so that no eye would turn in your direction. And now you all but tell me you are done with me."

Blake arose and pushed him back into his chair.

"He has told you nothing as yet," said the freebooter. "Keep still for a bit, and maybe he will."

Weir, now that there was silence, showed no haste to speak but sat enjoying the sips he took of the brandy and watching the blaze on the hearth fluttering under the sudden downward gusts of wind. But finally he spoke, and it was in a way that was cold and measured.

"A year ago, if you remember," said he, "we were called together somewhat hurriedly to advise in a dangerous matter."

"The affair of Magruder?" said Blake.

"Yes. How much the man had ferreted out we'll never know; but his panic for his money drew two sharp perils upon us. I placed the managing of the matter in your hands," and he looked at Tarrant. "I recall that my instructions were that you be cautious but final. And you blundered from the first. It would not have been so bad had you never heard of Anthony Stevens and so had no knowledge of his character. But Blake's tales, sent to us from the South, had told you of the manner of a man he was; you approached him with your eyes wide open, and yet you

tried to browbeat him, to bundle him out of your way, like snapping your fingers."

"Well," said Tarrant with his ready sneer. "You have had a deal of time to use your own methods upon him. And I note that he is still in the city, waiting to do us what mischief he can."

"He is here," said the captain quietly, "but the mischief he has done is little. My methods have wasted his efforts; and in time," with a gesture, "I hope to do more."

"If I had been given a free hand that night at the Crooked Billet," said Tarrant, "this young spark would have troubled none of us afterwards."

"I doubt if you 'd have been able to do anything," said Weir. "Like as not he would have killed you. I saw it in his eye."

"An active lad," admitted Blake, "and a clever one." But Tarrant sat frowning into the fire, and said nothing; and Blake went on, speaking to Weir, "Well, you've brought us from Chester in the devil's own downpour; and, as I think it was not to talk of bygones, suppose we come to the point of the matter at once and so settle our minds."

"It can be made plain to you in a moment," said Weir. "The usurer, Bulfinch, is dead, and his sons hold certain bills of his against Rufus Stevens' Sons, which are about to mature."

"Well?" said Blake.

"Their father and I had a private understanding—one completely between ourselves. If he had lived, the time of these bills would have been extended. He would have understood the necessity of this, but his heirs do not. You," to Tarrant, "have had dealings of one sort or another with this pair, and have influence with them. That is why I have called you to-night. You must speak to them; it is

most important that nothing be done that might cloud the credit of Rufus Stevens' Sons at this time."

"At this time?" repeated Tarrant, his eyes narrowing. "Why not just at this time?"

"Rumors spread," said Captain Weir. "They seem to be carried by the wind. Ship's gossips take them across the seas; letters carry them. I would not for a great deal have even a hint of trouble for the firm now; for in the space of a few months the ship *Rufus Stevens* begins taking in her cargo at Calcutta, and who knows what damage a slighting rumor might do?"

"I see," said Tarrant, and he turned fully about in his chair.

"The vessel is to stow as rich a cargo as ever came out of the East; and even the smallest evil report may prevent its being put aboard."

"I understand," said Tarrant. There was a silence; then he asked: "And am I to further understand that old arrangements between us, in matters of this kind, still stand?"

"They do. And your share of the labor is to see to it that the Bulfinches hold both their hands and their tongues."

Tarrant now laughed gleefully. All the anger had gone out of his face; he was vastly excited; words poured from him.

"They 'll do it," he said. "To be sure, they 'll do it! The richest cargo that ever came out of the East! Well, well! That 's saying a deal, for some fine ones have come from that part of the world. Oh, yes, have no fear of the twins. They will give what time is needed. So the old rat is dead! Well, well! But what matter? I can manage the sons. They 'll do what I ask. They 'll hold their hands until the *Rufus Stevens* is stowed, and weighs for home, if it takes till doomsday, or the day after!"

XXX

THE storm of wind and rain lasted through the night; straight out of the north it washed and blew sturdily, and with the deep voice of fall. By dawn the rain had abated; but the wind continued to blow shrewdly, and there was a cut to it, a keenness that had n't been felt since the early spring.

It was six o'clock when Anthony arose; he looked from his window into Sassafras Street; the way was drenched clean; the gutters were full of running rainwater; and the tang in the air caught his attention.

"A little more!" said he. "Let the wind hold in the north another day, and we 'll have frost."

And hold to the north it did; not only for another day, but for two days; and under its cold, clear breath of a night a thin ice began to form in the hollows. It got under the sickly miasma of the city and scattered it across the world. The death-rate dropped like magic; people took heart and regarded life with a new eye; even those who had clung to the heights in fear began in thought to venture back; and those who had held to the town, facing death and fighting the advance of the pestilence, allowed their nerves to go slack, and rested from their labors, white and worn and all but beaten.

It was the second day after the change that Anthony was summoned to the counting-house; immediately upon his entering, Tom Horn said:

"Your uncle is in his room."

Anthony knocked and went in. Charles sat at a table with Captain Weir; he looked haggard, as well he might, for in the last weeks of the plague his efforts had been tireless, and he had slept little. But, for all, there was a smile in his eyes, and his manner was as light as of old.

"Why, now," said he, "you 're prompt."

"There is something for me to do?"

"Something which *I* should do," admitted Charles, "only I have a distaste for such things. But if you are so minded, you can attend to it very well."

"I am quite ready," said Anthony.

Weir looked at Charles, who drummed upon the edge of the table with his finger-tips and seemed at a loss for words with which to frame what was in his mind. But, with an effort, he finally said:

"Things do not always go as smoothly as one could wish; not even with Rufus Stevens' Sons, as," with a look at Anthony, "you 've had occasion to see. Some time since, for one reason or another, it was needful that ready money in some quantity be on hand, and I was forced to go to old Bulfinch for it. The bills," said Charles, "are coming due, and, Bulfinch being dead, I 'd like an arrangement of some sort with his sons that would carry the matter over to a more convenient time."

"And is it your thought that I should speak to them?"

"If, as I 've said, you have the mind to."

"It may be as well to go at once," said Anthony.

"Now, there 's an excellent, ready-handed fellow," beamed Charles. "I would to God I had a talent for such things; but I have none—not a bit. And it plagues me to see matters needing doing, and I with no way of arranging them. So go to these rascals," said Charles, as he stood up, and patted Anthony smilingly on the shoulder, "and bargain with them to as good effect as you can. If they demand

a large increase in their usance, pay it, with a prayer that one day the devil may take them both."

"I'll do what I can," said Anthony.

"In some months more," said Charles lightly, "we'll laugh at all their kind, for the *Rufus Stevens* will have rounded the bend by then, and we'll have dazzled the market as it's never been dazzled before." As Anthony was about to go, Charles continued, "Weir has business in your direction, I think." Weir nodded to Anthony. "Suppose you take him as far as the entrance to the fox's den," smiled Charles, to the captain. "You may have a word of advice for him."

The two set out; and Captain Weir talked of the money-lender as a species, and of those of the Algerian coast in particular. They turned off Third Street and into Harmony Court with its shabby, leering buildings, its dusty windows and dirty passages. There was a trimly dressed quadroon maid standing in a shabby doorway, and Captain Weir eyed her keenly. Seeing the name of Bulfinch upon the shutter of the place, Anthony paused. But, before he could speak, Weir, still with his eye upon the quadroon maid, said:

"Now that I'm here, I'll step up with you. I may be of service, and my other business can wait."

Though surprised at this, Anthony said nothing. So they climbed the crooked, narrow stairs together and groped in the dark passage for the handle of Bulfinch's door. Within, their long legs stuck under a meager table, and grinning like a pair of gargoyles, sat the twins, Nathaniel and Rehoboam; and before them stood Mademoiselle Larfargue.

"We are sorry," Nathaniel was saying. "We are very sorry. But we no longer have this matter in charge."

"The money was had of you, I believe," said the girl.

"Of my father; but the bill was sold some time since,"

said Rehoboam. "Nevens, a broker on the floor below, was the purchaser. It was he who sent you the message, no doubt; and it 's with him you 'll have to deal."

The girl was moving toward the door; Anthony opened it for her, and went with her out into the passage.

"It is some distance to your lodging-place," he said. "Must you return alone?"

"My maid is awaiting me below," she said.

"Is there anything I can do?" he asked.

"I 'm afraid not," she said in a troubled voice. "It 's a matter of my father's—money borrowed at a time when it was much needed. They have begun to press him for it; he 's greatly distressed, for he had been given to understand that he had his own time to pay it in."

Anthony frowned.

"That has not the sound of a usurer's articles," said he.

He watched her down-stairs, then reëntered Bulfinch's counting-room. Nathaniel was speaking, addressing Weir, and his voice was pitched high in complaint.

"The sum she speaks of was gotten from our father, a man so old that he was in his dotage, and who must needs pay out moneys on undated paper. And a round sum, too, in Dutch pieces, and the bill with never a name of any substance on it."

Anthony came at once to the matter at hand: Weir stood by the table and listened composedly.

"More time!" said Nathaniel, in almost a shriek. "Rufus Stevens' Sons asking more time! You are joking!"

"Three months' extension is desired on the note due to-morrow," said Anthony bluntly, a transcript of the bill in his hand.

"A man who asks for time these days asks for hard money," said Rehoboam. "He is demanding minted gold. And money of any kind was never scarcer."

"We should like to oblige you—" began Nathaniel, but Anthony stopped him.

"What terms will you make for another three months? You've done your worst here, it seems to me," glancing at the paper; "no man with bowels could ask for more."

"Consider!" said Nathaniel. "Think of what *we* must pay for money."

"Think," said Rehoboam, "of the charges, interests, bonuses, asked of us in each transaction."

"To save your words and my patience," said Anthony, "let us restate the present terms in the new bill."

"With an added twenty-five per cent. to fit the altered times," said Nathaniel eagerly. "And that will cover but half of what it will cost us."

"Twenty-five!" Rehoboam looked horrified. "Twenty-five? Brother, you are going mad! How can you talk such a sum as twenty-five per cent. when—"

"I'll give ten," said Anthony, interrupting him. "So make out the paper, and let's have an end to the matter."

With many lamentations, but with sly glances of glee, the twins set about drawing up a new bill for Charles' signature; this they gave to Anthony, protesting that they were undone and that ruin itself would not surprise them. But the young man buttoned it up in his breast pocket with plain unbelief; then he gave them a curt nod and left the room, with Captain Weir behind him. At the next landing Weir paused.

"Mademoiselle Lafargue," said he. "Has she left this place?"

"No," said Anthony. "She has gone to speak to the other leech of whom they told her."

"Nevens was the name, I think," said Weir. He made it out, painted upon a door in the darkest corner of an ob-

scure passage. "If you don't mind," said he, "we shall go in for a moment. We may be of some assistance."

Anthony readily followed him into a low-ceilinged room, where daylight crept through the dirty glass of a single window. Huddles of time-stained and dusty papers were upon shelves, and in cubbyholes, and impaled upon hooks. A crazy old desk was all but buried under them; a corner cupboard was so gorged that papers bulged from doors and drawers that could not have been closed for years.

A little man with a short nose, a snuffy neck-cloth, and red-rimmed eyes was talking with Mademoiselle Lafargue. She turned a look upon Anthony that was surprised and grateful.

"Good day to you, gentlemen," said the little man in a squeaky voice. "I will give you my best attention in a moment." To the girl he said: "Pay heed to what I tell you. Women are not fitted for the carrying of important words. Say to your father that he is the person I desire to see. And I must see him immediately."

Weir stepped toward the usurer.

"Might I ask why, Mr. Nevens?" said he.

The man put his hand behind his ear, forming a sort of cup; he screwed his face into an expression of great interest and squeaked:

"Hey? I am hard of hearing."

"It happens," said Weir to the girl, "that I know something of the operations of this man, and I thought that Mr. Stevens and myself might be of some help to you."

"The matter that brings Mademoiselle Lafargue here," said Anthony, "seems to be a paper of her father's."

"I know its nature," said Weir. "After you had stepped out into the passage upstairs, the Bulfinches talked quite openly of it."

While they were speaking the broker kept his hand cupped behind his ear, while his eyes searched their faces like those of some sly little animal.

"Eh?" said he. "What do you say? Speak up. My hearing is not of the best."

"If you 'll permit me," said Weir to the girl, "I can probably save your father a journey here and the exasperation he 'd be sure to feel in dealing with a man like this." Without waiting for a reply he turned to Nevens. "Now, sir," he said, "a word with you."

Nevens seemed to get Weir's purpose,—perhaps it was from his attitude,—and he began to gesticulate excitedly.

"My business is with her father," he said. "It is a private matter, a transaction between us two, and has to do with a bit of commerical paper."

"Quite so," said Weir. "Have the goodness to permit me to see that paper."

"Eh?" Nevens seemed straining to hear. "What do you say?"

"Show me the bill."

"You must speak louder," said Nevens. "My hearing is not good. Once it was excellent; I heard everything; but it has grown quite bad. In dealing with me you must speak plainly; even then, sometimes," and he shook his head, "I scarce hear a word."

"And this, I take it, is one of the times," said Weir dryly. "Nevertheless," and he looked fixedly into the little ferret's face and spoke slowly, "I think you 'll understand what I 'm going to say. First, it's very well known that you are a mere instrument of the Bulfinches; the bills they place in your hands under the pretense that you have bought them they know to be desperate ones and not easily realized."

"I will speak with her father," said Nevens, hopping

about. "I cannot hear you. And I do not know you. It 's her father who must pay, and it 's he who must present himself."

"Second," said Weir composedly, "this bill names no definite time for payment; it states no rate of interest; it bears no indorser's name."

"Must I be robbed!" cried Nevens. "Am I to be dragooned and my money mishandled because it was loaned generously."

"It may have been generosity," said Weir, "but it was old Amos Bulfinch who loaned it, and, having known him, I 'm tempted to believe it was something else."

"My money!" chattered Nevens, on tiptoe with excitement. "I 'll have it. Is there no law to touch such cases? Is there no honesty in the world?"

But Weir motioned Anthony to open the door for Mademoiselle Lafargue; and they went out, leaving the little broker still hopping and shrilling his protests. On the sidewalk Weir gravely lifted his tall beaver hat.

"Pay no attention to any further communication from this man," he said to the girl. "The note, from Nathaniel Bulfinch's own word, is as I 've stated. It need be paid only when your father feels perfectly able to pay it, and it bears no interest whatsoever."

He bowed to her and, with a nod to Anthony, went on his way toward Fourth Street. And as Anthony and the girl walked in the opposite direction there was a silence between them. Then the girl said:

"That was thoughtful and kind."

"Weir is both," said Anthony. "He is a reticent man, with little warmth in his look; but more than once he has shown himself to me as a friend worth having."

"I have been holding him wrongly in my mind," said the girl. "I had thought him my enemy."

“You once thought I was your enemy,” said Anthony, and he smiled.

“I’ve been very foolish,” she said. “I’ve misjudged you all. I thought you selfish, and I thought Captain Weir cold and cruel. Some time since,” and she lifted her fine eyes to him with an honesty that thrilled him, “I saw I was wrong in my thoughts of you; and now I see that I have also been unjust to Captain Weir. For that man must be very kindly, indeed, who will go out of his way to serve one who he knows detests him.”

And Weir’s lips, as he went his way down the street, were twisted into a wry smile; and his eyes were also smiling the cunning, purposeful smile of the cat.

XXXI

THE autumn came in ruggedly—an autumn of storms, of flurries of snow, of bleak winds and driving rains. Under its breath the last trace of the plague vanished; the fugitives returned; normal life and trade were resumed; and in the hurry and bustle the terrors of the late summer were forgotten. The winter followed—a raging, boisterous, blowing winter, with deep snow in the wagon-ways, and ice in the river, the chimneys smoking, and the carts piled high with cord-wood.

At Rufus Stevens' Sons there had been no great briskness after the season of pestilence. There was a movement of trade through its warehouses and counting-rooms; but it was a dull movement, without rush or volume, with no ring of money in it, and no whetting of ideas. Anthony had a feeling that things were crumbling under him; the stout old walls were buckling. A ship of the firm's owning was held at Rio by the Portuguese because of the house's failure to pay certain moneys long due; another, lately repaired and cleaned at Barbados, was not permitted to sail until all debts were cleared; each ship that entered port from the East and South carried letters to the house from merchants and traders, shippers and agents, asking that settlements be made; and local merchants grew insistent that their accounts be dealt with forthwith. There was a steady crowding in, a pressing, a squeezing, and the wide-lunged old concern had no room to breathe; its slow methods, its calm reliance upon its own integrity, its ponderous insistence upon its own power had much the look of impotence. People who had inherited

their belief in the house now observed it keenly; and what they saw made them shake their heads.

Charles came and went and planned for the future; of the succession of days that broke and waxed and waned he said nothing, except in that they served as things upon which to base calculations of what the ship *Rufus Stevens* was likely to be doing on the other side of the world.

"She must have made her port in three months," said Charles. "With that hull and spread of sail, and mastered as she is, she could n't help it, unless the winds blew contrary every day. She'll surprise them in the East, I think. The Yankees have sent nothing like her, and the British are out-hulled and out-stowed, two to one."

He'd sit for hours, silent, still, a smile upon his face, his look many and many a league away in the track of the trades, across the warm, long waves of the Indian Ocean, past far lands and strange ships. There the very stars were new and had alien names; the horned moon swung downward like a yellow sword-blade; the sea and air were filled with grotesque life. What ports he came to! how they shrieked and strove and teemed and smelled! the stones were worn by generations of bare feet; the narrow ways roared with traffic, set toward the rivers; the deep warehouses were like rich mines; the merchants were grave of face and wore silken robes.

The *Rufus Stevens*, as he'd see her, was anchored in mid-stream, empty and standing high out of the water; she was a giant among ships, and she was waiting for her cargo. Her sails were furled neatly, as only skilful hands could furl them; her deck was as ordered as a parlor; the masts reared straight, like slim towers; after a three months' battering by the sea, her paint looked clean. And as she waited her merchandise was gathering! Charles would sit tighter in the corner of his sofa as he'd think of this; and he'd nurse his lame foot and smile; and his eyes would glow.

Busy brown hands were gathering that cargo; others were setting the items down in strange-seeming characters upon leaves of yellow paper; trains of asses were filing through mountain passes with packs of rich goods, with fabrics and shawls which would bear down the balance against red minted gold; camels plodded sullenly across hot, wind-swept plains, bearing rich carpets and soft rugs of rare design; flooding rivers bore craft moved by tides and poles and sweeps, or by the pressing wind in their worn brown sails. Silks were in these vessels, as delicate as though spider-spun, and as softly hued as a young morning.

And, then, there were the craftsmen of the cities; they were not without words in the matter. They offered things fashioned of gold and silver and ivory, richly and cunningly fashioned, of fine grace and beauty, the like of which was seldom seen out of the East. And, then, there were certain Jews, dark men, and said to have a strain of Moorish blood; they had gems in a strong room, guarded by men with hard, unbelieving eyes. But the mind of Charles barely touched these traffickers and their treasure; for when one thinks one talks, and it was not good to have it known that such items were in the ship's cargo; for there was no part of the world's waters where pirates were thicker than in the Indian Ocean.

"The kites," Charles would say. "The robbers! I wish I had mounted a few guns in her, and given her a few cases of muskets. These great, rich ships are as helpless as bustards."

His mind was seldom off the vessel. Item by item, the cargo would pile up before him: casks, bales, chests, rich silks, rare dyes, spices, fabrics of amazing texture, drugs, soft leather, gold vessels. There were days when he 'd talk of nothing else; he would be drunk with the prospect of it. But Anthony frowned and doggedly worked with the affairs of the house; for they, at least, were things one could put

one's hand on; a ship away at the other side of the world, as any man who knew the ways of ships would tell, was a chance, only. There were delays to be considered, and falling markets; there were gales and sinister currents and coasts dreaded of mariners; there were the springing of timbers, mutiny, and the Moorish corsairs; a drunken third mate had ruined the hopes of many a merchant; a helmsman whose mind was not on his work had smashed the ribs of hundreds of sound ships on easy headlands.

But the work of the counting-room was never-ending; the young man would no sooner, and sometimes with deadening labor, surmount a difficulty or avoid a peril than another of a greater growth would show itself at the door. He met them steadily and fought them as was his nature; but they came swiftly, one upon another, like the waves of the sea; they came so unexpectedly and with such crushing viciousness that he was gradually being borne down by them; the horizons of the house were clouded by mists and spray, and breakers seemed roaring all around it.

"It's no use," said Weir; "you cannot fight these things back; they lie too deep; they must take their course."

"And then?" asked Anthony, pale, harassed, but still stubborn.

Weir shrugged his shoulders.

"I have seen unexpected strokes," said he. "Fortune is peculiar." There was a cold smile in his eyes. "It may be your uncle's thoughts will come true."

Of a night, after the work of the day, Anthony would sometimes spend an hour with Christopher Dent; and he'd sit and smoke while the little apothecary watched him with troubled eyes.

"You are breaking down," said Christopher. "Your mind is killing your body. The vital elements have gone out of your blood. What does it serve to work as you are doing?"

When the house of Stevens falls, as seems likely now, I 'm told, will there be any purpose in finding your body in the ruins?"

"I shall, at least, have striven to prevent the fall," said Anthony.

Christopher made no answer to this, for there was no answer for such a saying. It was a man's nature speaking, and a man's nature does not change, as the little apothecary well knew, except by fierce rendings and great drifts of emotion.

One day news came, by an English ship out of the East, and carrying a great freight of woven cotton goods: the *Rufus Stevens* had reached her port after a swift and uneventful voyage, and, when the letter was written, was discharging her cargo. Charles was vastly excited; he limped to and fro and his face shone.

"She sails like a hawk, and is as safe as a city," said he. "She 'll make a high mark, as I 've told you; she 'll outrun and out-stow them all."

Three weeks later, more news; this time from the ship's supercargo; Winslow, the master, was sick of an injury and was being taken care of. The ship was now discharged and ready for the merchandise she was to bring back. Charles's face clouded when he read of his captain's disability; but it cleared up at once.

"Winslow is a hale man," said he, "and he 'll throw off a hurt quickly enough. Never fear for Winslow."

There was a long wait—well into February, when the next word came. Winslow was completely disabled; the ship had taken her cargo aboard and waited at anchor in the river; but his condition showed no sign of a turn. Also, and the supercargo was gravely concerned about this, those who were accustomed to issue insurances at Calcutta had refused to do so in the case of the *Rufus Stevens*. Pressed for a

reason, they were vague; there had been strange mishaps; the house of Stevens had been oddly unfortunate. Others had been appealed to; but the result was the same.

At this spot in the letter, Charles suddenly lost control of himself; with the veins of his neck swollen and purple, he began swearing futilely and bitterly. Weir finished reading the message. Because there was not like to be storms, because the ship was sound and new, because the American States were at peace with the world, it had been agreed, despite the failure of the insurance, that the *Rufus Stevens* sail for home with her store of goods. The vessel had waited three weeks for Winslow; but he was still in the hospital, and so another master was procured and they were making ready to put to sea.

Charles stopped cursing and listened; and Anthony, his eyes narrowing, asked:

"What is the new master's name?"

"He is Captain Gorman," read Weir, "out of New York, and, by good fortune, in Calcutta without employment."

"A good man," said Charles. "A very good man. Not the sort I would choose if there were many to select from; but an excellent man for all that." He turned to Anthony. "Eh?"

But Anthony's brows were heavy, and his eyes were burning under them.

"I've only heard of Captain Gorman once," said he, his mind going back to the ravings of old Bulfinch that night at Bush Hill; "and my impression then was not good."

"There is evil to be said of every man who has sailed the seas," said Charles. "Gorman has a heavy hand; crews are not apt to like him, and he cares more for the brandy bottle than is good for either him or his employers. But he is a good sailor, an excellent navigator, and brings his ships home, and quickly. These are the qualities, after all, that make the

shipmaster. Gorman will do very well; I'm glad of him in the emergency."

Anthony looked at his uncle; it was in his mind to tell him what old Bulfinch had said. But he frowned, listened, and held his tongue; for what purpose would the telling serve? The vessel was thousands of miles away, and her prow would be turned homeward months before any word could reach Calcutta. Also, he knew Charles's bounding, sanguine spirit would at once cry the thing down. What? give credit to the maunderings of an old wretch like Bulfinch? If one had given ear, and he could fancy Charles saying this, to the ravings of every one stricken with the plague, God knows what would have become of matters! For they had been made mad by it; and the words of people in that condition should not be listened to, much less remembered! So Anthony held his peace—and waited.

And now the ship was on the sea; the wonderous freight she carried was blowing nearer and nearer each day. The mind of Charles mounted into thin air; his spirits sang; his sayings were like things printed in old books. He laughed at the dull routine of the counting-room, and the bent shoulders and moody brows he saw there; and he put a good-humored curse on their doings and bade Anthony take his mind from worrying.

"But," said the young man, "the claims made against us must be understood and met. They are real; they are heaping up; I can only hope they'll not fall in on us."

"They are nothing. When the *Rufus Stevens* comes into the river we'll be able to pay every claim made upon us, three times over."

"But," said Anthony, "suppose she does not come?"

Charles laughed at this.

"Take your mind from provoking things," he insisted. "The world is full of such, but they were never made to

think about. To-day is shabby and has nothing to give you; keep your thoughts on to-morrow."

But the gaunt present had its spell on Anthony; and he could not take his mind from its grim approach. Later he spoke bitterly to Captain Weir.

"There is enough come to us already to give us our deaths, once the weight of it falls together; and what is to come, in his expectations, rests upon no better foundation than a tale told to children. But, nevertheless, the stroke of fortune you spoke of some time since seems the only thing that promises. If the house is to go on at all,—and I see the thing plainer each day,—my uncle's dream must come true."

"His visionings of the past had a way of doing so," said Weir. "And, who knows? fortune may repeat itself. This I know: let the ship once come to port, and there will be enough money to enrich a prince."

Two days later the sky, in the morning, was leaden; a bitter wind blew out of the northeast; the river was sealed, but there was a broad channel through the bay from New Castle to the sea, and ships attempting to beat out, so the news came up to the city, were driven back. For a week the wind continued, and the sky lowered like a dismal casque upon the world. The news of what was happening trickled in slowly, from down the river, from across the Jerseys, from New York. The gale was the heaviest known in years; the hardiest mariners, the stoutest ships had ridden in the bays, content to tug at their anchors and with no thought to face it. It had torn and yelled along the coast; the ocean had risen until spent waves were sweeping between the huts in some of the fishing hamlets.

Charles and Anthony had gone out early of an afternoon to get a bite at the City Tavern, and had paused to read a bulletin posted at the door; as they were turning from it

they met old Martin Dacy, mate of many a deep-water ship and master of more than one coastwise brig.

"Eh?" said old Dacy. "Wild winds! And no fresh news? Leave it alone, Mr. Stevens; leave it alone. The news 'll come fast enough. What the winds have done inside the capes and along the coast is all you 've heard of yet. You 'll hear more than that as the days go on; and when the thing 's blown itself out you 'll hear the worst. This has been none of your gusty blows, none of your mad things that don't know their own minds. There 's been a devil behind this one, a bitter, wicked devil, and he 's pressed steadily for days and days in the one direction, and he 's piled seas before him so that out there it must look as though the whole world were a-churning. The news 'll come later; and that merchant is lucky, sir, who has no ships at sea; and that sailor is lucky that has a fire to sit at, ashore, and a chimney for the wind to roar in."

Charles and Anthony went into the tavern.

"Old seamen are fond of mumbling such prophecies," smiled Charles, as they sat down at a table in the public room. "As they grow weaker themselves, the danger and power of the ocean magnifies in their minds. What would have been the day's work in their youth or their prime comes to be looked upon as vast peril in their old age. God help them," said Charles, "it may be a sort of compensation; they, like enough, think themselves fortunate in having grown well away from such dangerous days."

But, though there was a smile in Charles's eyes as he said this, Anthony saw a look of strained wistfulness; and, for all the laugh, there was something fixed and frightened in his face.

"What are ships for," said Charles, "if it is not to weather storms? With honest planks and plenty of deep water, a good sailor can outlive the roughest wind that ever came out

of the north. And the *Rufus Stevens* is an honest ship, I'll take oath to that; and what deeper water do you want than the Atlantic? And, again, while a storm may blow here or there, there may be calm weather enough in another place. I doubt if our ship has come far enough to feel even the edge of this."

With each day while the storm lasted Charles grew more and more buoyant in his talk. Before it broke, his calculations had been how very near the *Rufus Stevens* must be to port, how quickly she must have taken in her merchandise, how she had run out and set herself before the trades, and how she had blown with them across the leagues of water. But now he conjured up all sorts of things that must have held her back; she could not, he found, have left Calcutta for days after the time his first figures had given him; and then at this season of the year the trade-winds were not as brisk as might be; then, too, Gorman was no fellow for pushing matters. He had that reputation. He was one of the sort who was willing to take things fair and easy. And, this being so, taking all likely things together, the vessel must still be far away; she must be in a region of the seas where the weather was very calm, indeed.

But when the storm ceased, when the sun shone out brightly and the wind fell away to only a joyous romping, Charles was still. He went about quietly; his face was white; and in his eyes was the look one sees in the eyes of a boy who is afraid. And the time for news was at hand, news of deep water, and barren stretches of coast; ships came creeping in, broken in hull and rigging, with crews whose eyes stared and whose minds were stunned. Fearful tales were told of the deadly wind and the hill-like seas; vessels had gone down in the whirl of waters; the coast was piled with oaken bones; a thousand lives could be reckoned as lost even then; millions of money was scattered and sunk.

Then one of Girard's ships worked her way into the river; only one of her masts was standing; half her company had been swept away. Her master was a Chester man of the name of Frisbee, a plain sailor who said little but whose sparse sentences meant much. In Lat. $35^{\circ} 30' N.$, Lon. $63^{\circ} 10' W.$, before the storm was at its worst they had sighted a ship with her masts gone, pitching before the gale. He had stood by to see if he could give aid; and once venturing close to her he saw the name upon her bow. There was no mistake. She was the *Rufus Stevens*. Her decks were deserted; her crew had abandoned her during a lull, or had been washed away. Captain Frisbee had held his ship in position to help any who might still be on board, if the chance came, but was finally forced by the growing strength of the wind to give up the effort and look to himself.

Charles Stevens was told this by Frisbee himself, in the London Coffee-House. Anthony and Weir stood by—Anthony close to his uncle's elbow, for he feared the result. But Charles took it quietly.

"How unfriendly the sea can be," he said. "It takes men's lives, and it takes their goods. Merchants and shipmen have suffered much from it."

Frisbee stared, for the mild face was not that of a man who had lost a fortune; and Charles, his odd, impersonal look going about the public room, finally looked at Anthony, and he smiled as though gratified and surprised.

"Ah, you 're there, are you, Anthony?" said he. "I knew you would be." He put his arm across his nephew's shoulders. "You are a fine fellow." Anthony, a sudden shock at his heart, studied him with fearful eyes. "You see it, do you, Anthony?" said Charles, forlornly. "I knew you would at last. I should have told you when it first came. But I knew it would hurt you, and so I did not. It's a strange thing, is it not?" and he spoke very quietly, seemingly un-

aware of the ring of wondering faces about him. "It's a very strange thing. I've always thought it would be the dark I'd be afraid of. But it's the light."

"Well," said Frisbee, startled. "A good day to you." And off he went; but Charles did not see him go.

"Yes, it's the light," said he, nodding his head; "the long nights when I'd sit by the fire alone taught me that. I knew the darkness would come in the end, and I dreaded it. But I do not fear it now; one can sit undisturbed in the darkness; one can be quiet and peaceful. It's the light that brings unrest; it's the light that's always seeking to force its way through—a pale, bitter thing, and it always brings despair."

"Come home," said Anthony; and to Weir he added, "See if Dr. King can be found; and, if so, fetch him at once."

XXXII

SHIPS had gone down a-plenty, and merchants had lost their goods, and drowned sailormen were numbered in hundreds. New tidings came in with each up-river sloop, and with each coach that crossed Jersey. But there was no news that traveled so fast as that of the sinking of the *Rufus Stevens*; for with her had gone down the house of that name, and there had perished the fine mind of its master.

The exchanges roared with the intelligence; merchants wagged their heads and said they were sorry; agents said there had never been such a house and never would again; brokers regretfully put the concern out of their reckoning; bankers looked closely to their accounts and their securities.

"A new ship," said a portly trader, from his favorite vantage-place behind a measure of ale. "A new ship, and gone down. It's a pity; it's a great pity. I looked to see that vessel do rare things in the trade."

"And why?" asked a blunt-nosed man, who was drinking Cuban rum with hot water and brown sugar. "Because she was built like a whale's belly, and had masts that raked the sky? For me," and he stirred his drink with much positiveness, "I like a ship with reasonable stowage, and a spread of sail that's within the activities of human men. Give more than that and you court peril; your great vessels will always be floating coffins; they will be beyond management in any sort of stiff weather."

"Well," said the trader, "she's gone down, whatever the

reason for it; and I 'm told a fine cargo has gone with her."

"Stevens set much store by that cargo," said Mr. Stroude, who was one of the group. "He counted upon it to set matters aright with his creditors."

The snub-nosed man tossed off an equal half of his rum and hot water and regarded the remainder with appreciative eyes.

"Stevens was always the sort to build upon things to come. He never gave his mind to the day at hand," said he. "For me, I like a man that stands with his feet on the ground and with his eyes on things within common view. I can understand a merchant like that. And with one I can't understand," and the snub-nosed man shook his head, "I 'll have no dealings whatever."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Stroude sadly, "you 'll have no need to worry about Charles Stevens hereafter, if you 've ever done so before."

"What 's the news of him now?" asked the portly trader. "What do the doctors say?"

Mr. Stroude inhaled the fumes of his apple-toddy; then he tasted it; finding it to his satisfaction, he set it down.

"King is his physician," he said. "A very able, learned, and ready man. They tell me he has made a study of men's brains and what they are like to do in times when they are much bothered. I 've heard it said by those who should know that he had expected what 's come about, that he 'd been awaiting it these months past. Ah!" shaking his head in vast admiration, "science is a wonderful thing. The rest of us could go our ways days without end and never expect the half of that."

The snub-nosed man seemed not convinced.

"I 've heard men say years ago that they thought Charles Stevens mad," he said. "And, for my part, I never gain-

said them; for his ways of looking at things, or doing them, were not customary."

The portly trader cleared his throat, and the sound was plainly one of dissent.

"You may say what you like," spoke he, "but you'll never get public sanction for clapping a man into a mad-house because he's different from his neighbors. For," and he shook a thick forefinger, "if the world were filled with only people who thought in the customary way, and went their ways as others do, how should we go forward, I'd like to know?"

"I have heard it reasoned that way before," said the snub-nosed man stubbornly. "Nevertheless, I am for ways that I understand. There's the nephew, now; he's the kind of man for my liking, a straightforward, open-dealing young chap. A body can make something of him."

"Well," said the trader, "I'll say nothing against him, for I've seen no doings of his that I'd protest. An up-standing, candid dealer, and I'm sorry things have gone as they have, if only for his sake."

"Have you heard the news of him?" asked Stroude, who had been sipping his apple-toddy. He shook his head forebodingly. "He's taken to his bed."

"No," said the trader.

"He'd seen what was coming to the firm before the ship was lost, and worked day and night to waste the blow," said Mr. Stroude. "No one, so I'm told, will know how hard he worked."

"I wouldn't have thought a little extra labor would do hurt to a tough-built one like him," said the snub-nosed man.

"Nor I," agreed Stroude. "But 'tis the strain on the feelings and the nerves that does it. Thews are not much

help against such things. Also, he had a hurt, a year ago, a knock on the head; and then he didn't spare himself during the plague. These things come home to us when we are not expecting them.

The trader finished his ale.

"There never was a time," said he, "when he'd be of more service if he were up and about. The rats from Harmony Court and other holes and corners are gathered to loot what's left of the house; and, given their ways, they'll not leave a pick on its bones."

Anthony would have stood upon his feet if this dark thing had not come to Charles; he would have stood toughly on his feet despite everything else and would have dourly demanded the right of every man who sought to put hand on what remained of the business. But this unlooked-for turn of matters had sapped his reserve; he tottered; there was no ground to fight upon. And Dr. King sternly told him to go to bed and to stay there.

Captain Weir, calm, set of face, stood beside the young man, in his lodgings in Sassafras Street and told him of some of the things that were going forward.

"The Bulfinch bills fall due directly," he said, "and no doubt our misfortunes will double the clamoring from the others."

"You will do what can be done, I know," said Anthony gratefully, as Weir was leaving. "For the honor of the house, for its credit, and for its survival, do your utmost."

"You may depend upon me," said Weir. "You may depend upon me in every way. The temper of the creditors is yet to be seen; much may be possible, or little. But I will do all that may be done, so compose yourself to that."

Mr. Sparhawk visited Anthony later in the same day to ask how he did. The perky little man talked pleasantly and

lightly; the good spring weather was all out on them; it would be a time of freshening and renewing.

"You will mend," said he, to Anthony, "and begin to flourish with it."

Mr. Sparhawk was full of hope and cheer; but when the young man spoke of the affairs of Rufus Stevens' Sons he said as little as possible in answer.

"Take your mind from it," he advised. "What you could do you have done. Nothing more is possible. Banish it straight, and set yourself to getting well. The affairs of the house will be seen to."

"Of course," said Anthony. "Weir is still able. He will look to matters."

Mr. Sparhawk cocked his head sidewise and regarded Anthony with a mild look, curiously mixed with unbelief.

"Yes, of course," said he. "Weir. An excellent man of business; he has a keen mind and an adaptable way."

Mr. Sparhawk went to Dr. King's, but the physician was not in; and then he dropped in at Christopher Dent's and found the little apothecary very pleased to see him, indeed. Was Anthony progressing? Yes! Well, that was excellent news, indeed. But, of course, he would be. He needed rest, that was all,—a rest of both body and mind,—and then he'd be in wonderful health. And wasn't it quite amazing the way things turned out? Matters might not be so bad, after all, with Rufus Stevens' Sons. There was a chance for the house to recover. A good chance. He had been present during a conversation between Monsieur and Mademoiselle Lafargue. There were papers, it seems,—a deal of papers,—with which much might be done. And mademoiselle was going to take them to Captain Weir that very day.

"To Captain Weir!" said Mr. Sparhawk, and he compressed his lips and raised his brows.

"Ah!" said Christopher, "you knew, then, that she had

not regarded the captain favorably?" He smiled and rubbed his bald crown. "But she has safely recovered from that state of mind. Oh, yes, some time since. Indeed, there's more than one of late concerning whom she's altered her mind. It must be she was confused at first; she could not have looked at things clearly. When we are in a strange place and feel friendless, we are apt to be like that. But things are better with her now," with great satisfaction. "And she has a deal more confidence."

Of course that would be so! Time and usage, said Mr. Sparhawk, work many things out for us. The perky little man exchanged nods with Christopher over this, and smiled and took snuff. But that he was astonished he carefully put by; gently, then, he shaped the talk and delicately he pressed his questions. No, to be sure, she had not favored the captain. Quite the reverse, indeed. She had—could one go so far?—detested him. Christopher was of the opinion that it was not going too far. For some reason she *had* detested him; more than that, she had feared him. He had come to know that from her father, poor man, who'd occasionally step in for a chat of an afternoon.

"In coming across the sea, her father must have had an unrequited journey," said Mr. Sparhawk; "there have been little returns, I should say, in profits or ease." He shook his head sadly; and then he said: "It is fortunate that he had you for an occasional gossip. He came in often, I have no doubt?"

Oh, yes; quite often. And it seemed to ease his mind. He regarded Christopher, so it seemed, as a scholar and a scientist, which pleased the herbalist much; and they discussed many problems which had long vexed the world. Christopher was on the point of enumerating these questions; but Mr. Sparhawk gently diverted him to a more immediate thing. It was odd how the daughter had so suddenly reversed

her opinion of Captain Weir. Of course there were no reasons for it, and Mr. Sparhawk smiled as he said this. When women changed their minds, there seldom were.

Mademoiselle was not like that! Christopher was up at once in her defense. No, no! She always had reasons, and good ones, too. You could be assured of that. And it happened that he knew of what had changed her toward Captain Weir. Her father had spoken of it. And then the little apothecary told the tale of the visit to Nevens, the money-broker, as it had filtered through Monsieur Lafargue's mind to his own. Mr. Sparhawk listened appreciatively.

"Very good," said he. "Very good. That was like Captain Weir; it's quite like him. Each time I hear one of these little things told of him I am more convinced than ever that he is a clever man. An able man."

"And kind-hearted," said Christopher.

"Oh, no doubt," said Mr. Sparhawk; "there's no doubt of that in the world."

When Mr. Sparhawk left the apothecary shop he did not go home directly. First he paused at the side door, knocked circumspectly, and then inquired of the maid if mademoiselle was at home; she was, so it chanced, and he went up and in a few minutes was engaged in talk with her.

"I trust," said he, "that your father is quite well."

"Not altogether so," replied Mademoiselle Larfargue. "There have been so many disquieting things of late; he is cast down, and so his health suffers."

Mr. Sparhawk clicked his tongue pityingly. It was too bad, indeed. So many were incapacitated just then. Let the mind become fatigued by over-anxiety and harm was sure to result. Of course the Rufus Stevens' Sons affair must have added a deal to her father's disquiet. A most regrettable state of affairs, it was, too; to have a fine commercial house in such a state was deplorable.

"But," said mademoiselle, "all hope for it is not lost."

No, he felt that, too. He agreed with her; all hope was not lost. The house was in a bad way, to be sure, but actual practice showed it was most difficult to destroy a concern built up as solidly as this one had been.

"Only the most barbarous mercantile methods will do it," said Mr. Sparhawk; "for, you see, the place it has made for itself is so well settled and so customary that all usual processes favor it. Even now, confused as this house is," said Mr. Sparhawk, nodding with much vehemence, "there is fixed in my mind a sense of its potential strength. With considerate usage it will lift its head; it will resume and flourish."

The fine eyes of Mademoiselle Lafargue glowed. She went to a cabinet and, opening a drawer, took out some papers.

"But," said Mr. Sparhawk, "what chance is there for decent usage? Consider the cormorants gathered to stuff themselves; how can their greed be controlled?"

"I had thought of a way," said the girl. She sat down on the sofa beside Mr. Sparhawk, the papers in her hand. The perky little manner of that gentleman became much magnified; he put his finger-tips together, cocked his head sidewise, and pursed up his mouth. "My father," she said, "is a creditor of Rufus Stevens' Sons,—in a large way, I'm afraid,—representing his own name and those of other people in Brest. There are also certain bankers and citizens of that city who also possess credits."

"Am I to understand," asked Mr. Sparhawk carefully, "that these are the instruments of their claims?" and he nodded toward the documents.

"Yes," she said, and gave the papers into his hand. He examined each of them minutely, and when he had

finished there was a sparkle of excitement in his eyes. But he merely said:

“Well?”

“Is it not a commercial usage in this country, when one has credits with a firm that has fallen into disorder, to strive to bring regularity into its affairs?”

Mr. Sparhawk nodded.

“If one hopes to save any fair share of one’s due, yes,” said he. “It is the method of honest and sensible men. But, in this matter, I’m sorry to say, you have to deal with many who are neither; there are some who always hope to come by greater gain if permitted to pillage.”

“But not all are of that kind,” said the girl.”

“No,” Mr. Sparhawk agreed to this, but cautiously. “Not all.”

“Some honest men, also, hold claims against the house,” she said; “could not these,” and she pointed to the papers, “be joined with them? And would not such a combining be able to hold much ground against dishonesty? Could it not,” and her eyes flashed, “make the looting of this old house such a thing of open shame that even the hardiest of them would not dare attempt it?”

Mr. Sparhawk was regarding her steadfastly.

“How,” he asked, “would you lay your plans to procure such a result?”

“I had thought,” said she, “to put the matter in the hands of Captain Weir.”

“An excellent man,” said Mr. Sparhawk. “Respected by all in the port; a person of known principle, proven integrity, and marked ability.”

“I am glad you agree with me,” she said, and there was relief in her face. “I have had no one with whom to consult but my father.”

"You could not have selected a better man than Weir," said Mr. Sparhawk. "A fine choice, indeed." The little gentleman's finger-tips were most carefully joined, his silk-stockinged legs were crossed, and he dandled one foot before him. "For most matters, that is. But, for the one you have in mind, I'm afraid he would not do at all."

Her eyes opened wide; distress came plainly into them.

"A little reflection along the line of commercial usage will make my meaning plain to you," said Mr. Sparhawk. "Weir has been with Rufus Stevens' Sons for many years; he is deeply imbedded in the firm's affairs; and that is against him here. For those who have claims upon the firm should be approached by one who is a creditor himself. Or, failing that," said Mr. Sparhawk, "by one who is quite disinterested."

"What, then, shall I do?" said Mademoiselle Lafargue. "To whom shall I apply?"

"Do not distress yourself," said Mr. Sparhawk. "There is no need to do so. Your plan," and he nodded encouragingly, "is a very serviceable one. Indeed, to speak the truth, some such thing came to my own thoughts in the last few days. But, I had no claim upon the house, and so it was not for me to come forward. With these, however," and he rustled the papers which she had given him, "any person with the proper authority could make a beginning which might lead to a creditable ending."

She looked at him, and there was a new hope in her face.

"I have heard it said," and her voice had a slight quaver in it, "that you have a feeling of friendliness toward Mr. Anthony Stevens."

Mr. Sparhawk bent forward a little.

"There is no young man in the city," said he, "indeed, there is no man of any age anywhere, for whom I have a larger respect, or whom I would strive more to please."

"I, too, have a—a great respect for him," said the French girl. "It is because of that, and because I once did him an injustice in my thoughts, that I want so to help him now. He is ill; he is unable to face the things he *would* face so well; are you strong enough in your friendship for him to take these papers and make all the good use you can of them?"

"Mademoiselle," and the little gentleman regarded her, his head to one side, and a thing like victory in his eye, "my friendship is strong enough for that, and for more than that."

He talked with her earnestly for some time; then, at his bidding, she made herself ready for the street. He took his hat when she returned, and they went out together, he with the papers buttoned up in his pocket and stepping briskly along at her side.

XXXIII

CHRISTOPHER DENT spoke to Anthony at his lodgings in Sassafras Street a few days later; the young man was hollow-faced and his eyes were hot and tired. But he listened to the little apothecary gratefully.

“So,” said Christopher, “from what I hear, away he went with her, and with the papers in his pocket.”

“Where did he take her?” asked Anthony.

“Where but Crousillat’s? There they had a long conversation with the old gentleman himself; and then they went to Girard’s.”

Anthony stirred on his bed.

“With what result?” he asked.

“Both the Frenchmen listened carefully. Was not made-moiselle a countrywoman of theirs? Ah, but this Sparhawk is a crafty little whip. He knows what to do. And after he had their favor,—and the favor of two such as they is of a deal of value when one means to approach others,—he went to Wilcock’s, at the India Stores, and afterwards to some others. In the space of one day’s going about he had the matter well in hand; he had spoken to banks and legal people, and a conference was had with such creditors as were within call. Matters were arranged, it seems, as easily as you’d turn your hand; everything was made comfortable and snug, and with nothing unpleasant in the whole of it.”

“Good news, Christopher,” said Anthony. “Fine news, indeed.”

“I felt you’d think so, though I was in a fright at fetch-

ing it," said Christopher. He sat regarding Anthony for a space and then said: "There have been many hulks broken up in Harmony Court, but the house of Stevens is not to be one of them—at least, not yet. For Mr. Sparhawk, together with Mr. Crousillat,—a most excellent pair for such a task,—have been agreed upon to receive what is left of the business and to conduct it until such times as matters begin to clear up."

"Good news again," said Anthony. "I feel as though I had a heart in my body once again, and there 's a stir in my blood. And who but you, Christopher, would have thought to bring me such good word?"

But the apothecary shook his head.

"The truth is that it was not I who thought of it," said he. "It was mademoiselle."

"Ah!" said Anthony.

"There he lies, ill," she said. "There he lies in his bed with never a one to carry a word to him of what 's being done." With that," said Christopher, "I spoke of the doctor 's directions, and how you must be kept from care. But she would not hear to it. 'News like this,' she says, 'will do good; certain worries have leagued to trouble his mind; and this will put an end to them. He 'll get ease by it.'"

"She is kind," said Anthony. "Please carry her my thanks. She is very kind."

"Did I not say you 'd hold her in a deal of esteem when you came to know her better?" said Christopher, gratified. "She has a fine spirit and is well instructed; and things like those make excellent women. The matter that rose up between you had no real place in either of your minds; I always felt that. And, now that you see each other in a proper light, I 'm much pleased."

The news brought by Christopher Dent so heartened Anthony that in less than a week he was out of his bed;

and in a day or two more he was taking slow-paced walks in the street, trying his strength and steadiness. On one of these he stopped at Dr. King's; and in the hall he met Mademoiselle Lafargue, just on the point of leaving. She held out her hand to him and smiled; and, as he took the hand and held it closely, she said:

"It is so good to see you out once more. From what I 'd been told, I had not expected it so soon."

"God knows how long I 'd have been upon my back, grieving for strength," said Anthony. "But your good offices saved me a deal of it."

"Your thanks should go to Mr. Sparhawk more than to me," said the girl. "Without his shrewd wit and ready realization, I 'm afraid little would have been done."

They talked for a space; their voices were level, their manners still; but there was a something about each of them which glowed like an aura; the edges of these sought to meet and lap but the dregs of a bitter wind still blew between them, and it was not yet to be. Then Dr. King appeared and took Anthony away into his study.

"There is a space yet to bridge before his health is fully recovered," said Mrs. King to mademoiselle. "He is not yet strong."

"His eyes are tired," said mademoiselle. "His spirit looks through them and tells of the sufferings of the past months."

"The doctor is concerned about him," said Mrs. King, as the girl was going. "He recommends a simple, natural life, in a place where he can rebuild his body while his mind rests. He is of an outdoor breed, and you cannot keep such housed up when their vitality is lowered without grave risk."

Mademoiselle carried this away with her, and that night, as Christopher Dent and Tom Horn sat in the room back of the shop, the little apothecary grinding some healing

agent into a proper fineness, and Tom sitting silent, his eyes fixed upon the wall before him, the girl came in. At once Christopher brought forward a chair, dusted it carefully, and offered it to her. She sat down and looked at them both.

"You are always so comfortable here, and so contented," she said. "You have your work and your books and your thoughts. I can envy one who has such quiet interests."

The little apothecary looked gratified and rubbed his bald crown.

"But," he said, "your own affairs will quiet down before long. Oh, yes, you may be sure of that. You have gone through a deal; but a calm comes finally, and then we are less stirred by those affairs of which others have control. We grow content within ourselves; and that, Mademoiselle, is as it should be."

He turned once more to the mortar and began grinding at the substance in it, nodding in the wise way he had; and she sat smiling at a fancy that came into her mind, that he was really an ancient nature sprite who had gathered great stores of peace in the woodlands and fields, along with the barks and roots and flowers of his trade. And then the thought of woodlands and fields caused her mind to go to Anthony and to what Mrs. King had said earlier in the day. So she repeated the saying to Christopher, and he listened with concern.

"The doctor spoke of that, here, only a few days ago, when I urged certain curative things as being desirable in our young friend's case. 'There is no remedy like air and quiet and work with one's hands,' he said. And who knows but he spoke truth?"

"It may be," she said, "that in your going about in unfrequented places in search of simples you have come upon a place with the qualities Dr. King has in mind."

Christopher ceased bruising the bark and put the pestle carefully down.

"Dr. King spoke of the sea," said he. "He believes greatly in the winds that blow from it, and the salts and other substances that are in it. But the spot I have in mind on the coast of the Jerseys is lonely and desolate."

Tom Horn stirred.

"It is a lonely place that is needed," said he; "a place of sun and open spaces, where a man can live close to the eternal facts."

The girl looked at him with sudden attention.

"Why," she said, "that sounds like the truth."

"There is one strip of coast that I know well," said the apothecary; "but it is too wild and too far from help for a man as lowered in health as Anthony Stevens."

"He needs no help," said Tom Horn. "His body is tough and strong. It's his spirit that's been trampled down; and there is healing for that in the stillness of the sea and the vast sky. I have felt the touch of these things, and I know. Each is a potent good, and has been to the advantage of many a man."

"I'll not gainsay you," said Christopher hopefully. "And there is a hut," to the girl, "tight against the weather when I slept there last; this would serve him if he'd care to venture to those parts, which I doubt."

Tom Horn looked at Christopher, his pale, luminous face wistful and oddly intent. But he spoke to mademoiselle.

"He comes here sometimes of a night," said he, "to smoke and to talk for an hour before bed. It might be well," to the apothecary, "if you spoke to him of this, should he chance in to-night."

Anthony did chance in; but it was after mademoiselle had gone; and while he kindled the tobacco in his long-stemmed clay, and made himself comfortable, the little apoth-

ecary pounded and ground away at the bark in the mortar and took on a look of enormous guile.

"Do you mark how thick the city's air is, in spite of the bright days?" he asked.

Anthony looked surprised.

"Why," said he, "I've thought it quick and pleasant enough."

But Christopher shook his head forebodingly.

"It will be many a long day before the lees of the plague are driven entirely away," he said. "It clings to those things and places it has touched for a long time after. There is no health here," and he shook his head again; "it's a sickly place just now. And, in your weakened state, you'd do well if you'd leave it for a space."

"Sea air is driven clean," said Tom Horn. "Sea air would enrich you."

"I've thought of that once or twice," said Anthony. "A short voyage might go well with me."

"To be sure," said Christopher readily. "Of course. Why had n't that occurred to me? A steady ship might be best after all. Let us say, a coastwise brig, with a sober master, and carrying cargo that's in no haste."

"A ship is no place for you," said Tom Horn to Anthony. "You need a quiet mind; and aboard ship there will be bellowing mates, and foremast hands who swear sour oaths. And at sea you'd be beyond call if needed in any matter of business."

"Why, yes," said Christopher. "That is true. Perhaps the hut I spoke of on the shore is best for you, after all." And then, as the young man looked at him inquiringly, he told of what had passed between mademoiselle and Tom Horn and himself. And Anthony listened with favor.

"There you'd be quite alone," said Tom Horn. "It cleanses the soul to be alone after a time of great stress;

and things resolve themselves as they would not otherwise."

Anthony asked many questions of Christopher, and the answers seemed greatly to his liking. There were fish to snare and wild fowl to shoot; the hut was snug and faced the sea; the wind swept the beach and the dunes and the bay. The young man drew the air into his lungs in anticipation.

"In such a place," said he, "a man might grow as well as he had a mind to."

"You 'll go, then," said the little apothecary, pleased.

"I will," said Anthony. "It's a good thought, and I thank you for it."

Tom Horn said nothing but sat and watched Anthony in the same odd way he had formerly done when the young man first came to Rufus Stevens' Sons. And when, at last, Anthony arose to go Tom went with him.

"I 'll take you a step or two on your way," he said.

They paced along, side by side; Anthony was silent; now and again Tom Horn would look at him; more than once the odd clerk seemed about to speak, but paused on the verge of it. At last he said, his head nodding:

"There is a shoal there, and the white ghosts move through the night when the winds blow."

"Eh?" Anthony looked at him.

"They reach miles out to sea, and shipmen avoid them as they would death," said Tom Horn.

"Oh!" said Anthony, understanding, "you mean at the place Christopher spoke of? Yes, I've heard the coast in that region is counted dangerous."

They fell silent and walked on; as they passed under the dim street-lamps, Tom Horn would again look at Anthony with some of the old, strange speculation in his eyes. Once, when the young man caught his glance, he said:

"You are not strong; your life's circle is too narrow.

"But," and he nodded assuringly, "it will grow wider; and then we shall see."

Anthony made his preparations quietly; none knew he was leaving the city except those already acquainted with his purpose. He would have told Captain Weir, but when he asked for him at the counting-house Tom Horn shook his head.

"He has been gone these four days," said the clerk. "And he left no word."

"Ah, well, it 's no matter." Anthony stood, cutting at his boot-leg with a riding-whip, and gazing about the silent counting-room. He thought of what this house once had been, and of what it now had come to; he thought of Charles as he had seen him that morning, smiling, childlike, engaged in meaningless pastimes. His breath grew tight in his chest, and he turned, about to go.

"The wagon, I suppose," said Tom Horn, "is already beyond the river, laden with your goods?"

"Yes," said Anthony, "and will start across the Jerseys as soon as I reach it. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Tom Horn. He reached into his high desk and produced a long pistol, carefully oiled and polished. "Take this and keep it by you," said he. "The place you are going to is an unfrequented one; and in such places unexpected things are sometimes met."

Anthony took the weapon and stood regarding the man for a moment.

"Thank you," said he. And again, "Good-by."

He went out, mounted his waiting horse, and rode away toward the ferry at the foot of High Street; and Tom Horn stood in the counting-house door, gazing after him until he had disappeared.

XXXIV

TO one who did not know Tom Horn very well, his manner and his occupations, after Anthony left the city, did not change. He still arose and was abroad while the dawn was touching the river and took his breakfast standing at the bar of the Boatswain and Call. Then through Water Street, freshly awakened; with a great copper key he 'd open the counting-room door at Rufus Stevens' Sons; it was dusty and silent, for but a trickle of trade ran through it now; but Tom would gravely take off his coat and hang it away; then he 'd put on a worn jacket, mount his high stool, and the day had begun.

But what was this scrawling of figures on bits of paper? What was this endless computing and calculating and balancing of facts? As the day wore on he would be surrounded by these fragments, each bearing a mysterious statement; and his mind seemed laboring with some dimly seen thing. He descended into vast pits of speculation and emerged with fresh figures to be worked into new results. But that was not all; in the midst of these calculations he 'd be seized with fits of bodily activity; he 'd get down from his stool, put on his coat and his tall, shabby hat, and hurry out, locking the door behind him. And these errands always had to do with wind and weather; ships and shipmen also took their places in his interests, as did tides and changes of the moon, and wrecks and loss, and bitter news. Steeped in these he 'd hurry back to the silent counting-room; then more figures, more descents into the pit, more reveries, more striving toward the thing sensed so clearly but so dimly seen.

Of a night, after he had taken his supper and read the "Gazette" at the tavern, he 'd make his way to Christopher Dent's; the two would sit with the window open and the evening air stirring in the room, and they 'd talk.

"There is no thing so natural as a circle," said Tom Horn. "The world is shaped like one; it moves in one. Every finished movement is a circle. The tides of the sea move in a vast one."

"To the eye, at least, the sun and moon are round," agreed Christopher. "Though the stars, indeed, seem to depart from the rule, and have points."

"There are as many tides in the sea," said Tom Horn, "as there are winds. And the winds are countless." He drew his chair nearer the little apothecary, and his voice lowered. "There are waters," said he, with the strange, luminous look in his face, "that crawl through the sea like great serpents; they bend themselves across the world, and ring in hopeless things."

"I have heard tales of such," said Christopher, "but I have not been able to credit them. For how can one body of water move through another and keep its integrity?"

"They are like great serpents," maintained Tom Horn, "miles broad, and with the movements of the earth and moon behind them. Storms blow across these currents, but a storm's authority is only for a moment, and the current goes on; meeting others like it, they join, and so the sea is encircled. And in the center of this circle," said Tom Horn, "is a dead spot, like an ulcer, where all helpless things drift and stay—broken ships and broken men; there they lie, bleaching in the strange lights, and with silent death coming toward them out of the mist and darkness."

"That," said the little apothecary, "would be the Grassy Sea—the Sargasso, as the Spanish shipmen called it. I've heard it spoken of more than once. A strange place," and

Christopher shook his head; "a queer, still place, I have no doubt; and they say few men who have seen it have lived to tell of it."

"The currents drag all things about with them which have not the service of the winds," said Tom Horn. "Around they go in the circle, around and around, all the time getting nearer and nearer to its inner edge; and then they drift into the dead spot, and the Sargasso has them for evermore."

"An unhappy fate," said Christopher. "A most unhappy one."

There was a silence; then Tom Horn put out his hand and touched the little apothecary on the knee.

"In mid-Atlantic," said he, "there are no reefs or bars; if a ship is stout and honest she does not readily sink in deep water."

"No," said Christopher, "she should not. There is reason in that."

"If a ship, known to be the work of steady, good artificers, is seen in great distress in mid-ocean," said Tom Horn, "in great distress, but most likely whole of hull, what warrant have we in afterwards thinking her at the bottom of the sea?"

"Why," said the apothecary, his eyes growing round, "I do not know. I have given such possibilities but little thought."

"As there were no rocks to dash her on, and no sands to trap her, reason says she might still be afloat," said Tom Horn. He seemed suddenly excited and got to his feet.

"An honest, good ship, mind you—and in mid-ocean! Who can be sure she 'd foundered? With her timbers tight and her hatches down, who can be sure her cargo has been injured?" He took up his hat, and Christopher saw that his hand trembled as he did so. "I will be going," said Tom Horn; "it is past my bedtime, and there is a deal for me to

do to-morrow. I have many figures to set down and much study to give them. Good night."

"Good night," said Christopher, rounder-eyed than ever. He followed Tom to the door, and watched him down Water Street. "Good night."

Christopher, after he 'd seen the odd clerk out of sight, shut the door, and sat down. But he did not sit long; in a few moments he was up and pacing the floor in much agitation; then he busied himself with some formulas, ground many powders and weighed them in a tiny scale. But he could not take his mind from the surprising thought Tom Horn had planted there; and afterward, when he had gone to bed, he lay and counted the hours each time the clock struck them; at three he fell asleep, and dreamed of wondrous events, and happenings that made him marvel.

It was the middle of the morning when he left off his work, brushed his coat, went to the side door, and asked to see mademoiselle. And while he sat upon the edge of a chair, she upon a sofa before him, he told her, word for word, as well as he could remember, of what Tom Horn had said the night before.

"Too much heed can be given to such things," said Christopher; "for we all have our desires, and so may be led astray by speculations which have no substance. And, again, poor Tom, while a person of many rare qualities is—so it's thought—odd in his manner and in his thinking. So this may be a mad thing only. But it's kept with me all night long and has been at the elbow of my mind so far in the morning; and I thought it as well to speak to some one who I knew had interest in the matter."

There was a spot of color in each of the cheeks of mademoiselle; her eyes sparkled with eager excitement. She asked Christopher many questions; he answered as fully as

he could; all the things the clerk had said, he repeated, but further than that he could not go.

"It may be his fancy, as I 've said," he told mademoiselle. "I 'd pin no faith to it that it carried any value."

"And why not?" asked the girl. "Why should you not? For me, I 'd credit him with a deal of knowledge, a deal deeper than most. His mind is quite clear, for all his manner is odd, as the matters I 've heard he 's said to Anthony Stevens and the things he 's pointed out have shown. He is the one among them all in the counting-room who had the keenness to see and the purpose to remember."

"It is so," said the little apothecary. "It is so, indeed. I had something of that in my mind, and it troubled me."

"I should like to speak with him," said mademoiselle. "It may be that with questioning he would say more."

"That 's a thing that 's easily put to the test," said Christopher. "He lives in Pump Court, but a step or so from this; and we shall go see him any time you wish."

"Thank you," said the girl. "If he returns to your shop in a night or two, send me word; if not, we shall go see him, as you say."

And so Christopher Dent went at once back to his apothecary shop, and in a much more peaceful state of mind.

ANTHONY STEVENS'S journey across New Jersey was slow; the track he followed was through the pine barrens, dismal even in the flush of spring. The wheels of the wagon sank in the sand, and the span of stout horses sweated in their collars. Of an evening—the fourth since his start—he arrived at a small white town, standing sparsely upon the banks of a creek which let out into the bay. This was Barnegat; and here the young man bargained for transportation to his journey's end.

His goods were transferred to a flat-boat, and with the first peep of morning they were out of the creek; the patched sail filled, and the boat stood away for the long, low shore that faced them. The morning was still wet with mist when they grounded in a cove; across the meadows Anthony saw the blue-white of the dunes, and beyond them was the shine of the moving sea; thousands of migrating birds filled the sky, coming from the south, and hovered in twittering hordes over the wax-myrtle thickets; here and there a pair of black-ducks, delayed in their journey north, paddled about, feeding on the edge of the cove.

"There 's the house you mean," said the boatman to Anthony.

It stood upon a dune and overlooked both the bay and the sea; it was low and strong and had small windows much like ships' dead-lights; the timbers plainly were parts of vessels, broken by the sea and cast ashore.

"'T was built years ago by a man who lived by what he took out of the bay and what he found on the beach," the

boatman told Anthony. "But it 's seldom used now by any one; this beach is not much frequented; you 'd go many a mile along it and never see a soul."

The man helped Anthony carry his provisions along what remained of a track across the meadows; then his bedding and blankets and other equipment followed. The door was fast only by a wooden latch; inside, the place resembled a ship's cabin; and after the boatman had gone Anthony opened the small, round windows and permitted the fresh sea air to blow through it; then he sat down upon a keg and looked around.

The timbers of the hut were massive, and had been hewn to fit; the crevices were overlapped outside by scantling; there were shelves over the windows and the door; in one corner was a rough cupboard, in another a bunk; and there were chairs and a table made up of materials cast up on the shore. A battered brass ship's lamp hung from the center of the ceiling by a chain. Through the open door he saw the dunes and the sea and the sky, like a picture set in a frame—the dunes with their sparse, strong grass, and mist-like blue that blurred the glare of the sun; the sea heaved, green and endless, breaking white upon the bars; the sky carried soft, floating draperies over its deep bosom, and, far out, stooped suddenly to meet the lifting waters.

Anthony cut some soft branches from a small cedar-tree which grew near the hut and fashioned himself a broom; with this he swept the walls and floor; then he unrolled his bedding and made up the bunk, sailor-fashion, stowed his salt beef and dried fish and fruit, his flour and beans and peas, and meal and tea; a well sunken from the top of a neighboring dune was cleaned and made sweet, the roof was seen to, to guard against possible rains. Then Anthony cleared the fireplace of the ash of an ancient fire, and laid some sticks for the building of a new one; he placed a thin

array of books upon a shelf over a window, hung a fowling-piece and the pistol which Tom Horn had given him upon the wall; he saw to it that his powder was protected from the damp, and began to feel at home.

Toward evening he set out for a tramp on the beach; it was broad and steep; the broken waves would rush up the incline frothing, and then go swirling dangerously back. High on the horizon-line he saw some filled topsails; and to the northeast he saw a shoal which ran as far as his vision carried, and the hurrying waves broke over its bars in a cloud of mist.

"That," said Anthony, "must be the point Tom Horn spoke of. And I can see well how the 'white ghosts would move through the night when the winds blew.'"

It was dark when he returned to the hut; he lighted two candles, and, when he had a good bed of coals in the fire-place, cooked his supper, which he ate with great comfort. The sea air was thin and chill after the sun had gone; so with the fire built up, the candles drawn close, and a blanket thrown over the biggest of the arm-chairs, he sat with a book until almost midnight; after that he rolled himself up in his bunk and slept soundly.

Next morning he bent a sail on a boat he 'd brought from the mainland and prowled about among the coves of the bay; in the afternoon he explored the island to the north, and found it abruptly cut by a swift and dangerous-looking inlet, at the mouth of which began the range of shoals and bars he 'd noticed the evening before.

To the south all was beach and dunes and sky; the gulls winged above the water; fish-hawks flopped drearily up and down the line of surf; sandpipers followed one receding wave in search of beach insects, to scamper alertly back before the rolling advance of the next. The air was bracing; the smell of the sea was grateful. As the charm of the place settled

upon him, Anthony would stand at midday upon elevations, with the free wind blowing about him, the sun warm upon his body, and feel the life mounting in him. Days and then weeks went by; he took fish out of the bay for food; he brought turtles from the high bar; he cut green, edible plants for his table; now and then he had a duck, though they were none too plump at that season; at rare times he had a rabbit for the pot with a dried leek from the cluster hanging to a hook in the rafters.

The sun burned him brown; the rowing, hauling, and tramping toughened his thews and gave stiffness to his bones. His eyes grew bright and ready; and, as those grinding, punishing last days at Rufus Stevens' Sons became fainter in his memory, the old tilt came back to his chin and the steadfast quality returned once more to his gaze. He'd plunge into the surf of a morning; tingling with the water, air, and sun, he'd cut wood for his fire, and cook his porridge, and bake his corn-bread upon the coals. Then he'd sit by the open window, eating, and sipping his wine and water, and he said to himself that he had begun no days like them since those he'd spent breasting the wilderness, or stepping the deck of a Spanish ship, voyaging among the southern seas.

After breakfast he'd scour the beach to see what the tide had brought in; planks, cordage, spars, broken ship's furniture, all added to his ease of life; and tinkering it into useful things passed many of his hours with profit. In mid-morning he'd hoist the sail of his boat and point away to his fishing-places; in the afternoon he'd lie on the top of a dune in the still of the sun; the sea washed in monotonously, a fishing bird complained in his passage, the wind rustled in the thickets on the meadow edge; but the sense of isolation would be on him completely; his eye and body were keen and eager, but his mind drowsed, resting after its wearing fight.

In all this time Anthony had seen no one on the island, and there was no sign of another habitation anywhere. Toward the mainland he 'd frequently see a small sail, but they kept to their side of the bay; to seaward many vessels passed. Ships, schooners, brigs, and sloops, when the wind was in the west, ventured into the flat, near-shore waters, though none ever paused on their way. But one day while a tower of storm-clouds was building in the northwest he saw a small brig, standing on and off, and seeming in no haste. She was, as far as Anthony could see, a craft of no outstanding character; her hull had the unkempt look of a carelessly kept fishing-vessel; her dress of sails was patched, and discolored by long use, except one top-sail, and that was white and new and shining. Though the wind freshened and blew levelly out of the windows of the storm-tower, the brig still kept pondering in and out; once a boat was lowered; but a shrill note crept into the wind, and the sea began to leap a little under its urging, and the boat was hoisted aboard directly; and the vessel pointed her nose toward the southeast and ran for deep water.

While at his supper that night Anthony listened to the rain washing against the cabin windows and roaring on the roof. The wind carried the sand and spray before it; the thunder rattled, and the lightning drove sharply across the sky. But the fine fish Anthony had hooked smoked deliciously on the table; there was rice cooked white and dry; there were stewed leeks and good corn-bread; and a brandy-flask seemed to expand its stout mid-section and smile rosiely at the candle-light. And, later, snug and safe in the stout cabin, Anthony put more wood upon the fire; for all of early June the east wind chilled the air with its wet touch; the candles were cheery, the billets flamed up, and, with a book and pipe and a comfortable chair, he saw the storm through

to its peak; then he blew out the light and went to bed, while it still jeered and strove, but with a tiring voice; and he slept soundly.

He found the beach cut and lashed desperately next day, and the seas were still roaring and boiling in, making the cuts deeper and changing the whole aspect of the shore. But the wind had gone down, and late in the day the sea sullenly did likewise. Then, far down the line of shore, as Anthony trudged along to view the havoc of the gale, he saw the stern of a long-boat sticking out of the sand. His eye told him, as he approached it, that some previous storm had driven it in and buried it; and now this one had uncovered it once more. The stern was badly stove; he saw that as he drew nearer; and another thing he saw was that the boat, for all her mishandling, was a new one. And then, as he stepped around the broken stern, he found painted upon it the name of *Rufus Stevens!*

Anthony stood quite still for a long time; his eyes never moved from the painted name; his mind carried a picture of the vessel to which the boat had belonged. The *Rufus Stevens!* A stout, good ship! The hopes that had been put in her!—hopes as precious as the stuffs she stowed! And now she was a broken ruin somewhere in the sea's depths, and the hopes were broken, too, in the ruined mind of her owner. A plunging, bold ship! And she would have come safe home if the dirty hand of villainy had not been put upon her. A broad-sailed ship. Christ! it was a shame to think of her, used like that; and no mind or voice to save her.

"I'd give my arm to have stood on her deck when her peril came upon her," said Anthony, all his muscles tight. "The rats! They sank her in the sea, and brought living death to as kindly a man as ever God made!"

That night Anthony did not sleep well, for the thought of the lost ship troubled him gravely; so he arose and dressed

and stepped out into the quiet of the summer night. His eyes went seaward, for something there caught his attention; it was a light at no great distance—intermittent, winking, sometimes with long pauses between, sometimes rapid, considered, carrying an undoubted meaning. Then the night grew dark and blank; and, though he watched a long time, Anthony saw the light no more. He tramped about until weariness urged him back to bed, and this time he slept with no disturbing thoughts breaking in upon him.

Next morning he was early upon the beach and looking sharply about for any sign that might give a reason for the light that had come winking offshore. He saw nothing until he reached the spot where the stove long-boat of the *Rufus Stevens* protruded from the sands. All about her were the imprints of men's feet, which the making tide had already begun to wash away. Anthony studied them, his eyes intent under frowning brows; and then, as he lifted his head, he saw a vessel riding upon the horizon-line. She was a brig; and one of her topsails glinted white in the morning sun.

XXXVI

IT so chanced that Tom Horn did not appear at Christopher Dent's for some nights; and so Mademoiselle Lafargue, with brisk little shoes clicking upon the floor, and silken gloves upon her hands, and a lace shawl about her head, came into the apothecary's shop in the twilight before he had kindled his lamps. She forthwith demanded that he keep his promise and go with her to Tom Horn's lodgings, that she might speak with the odd clerk in the matter he had dwelt so earnestly upon some nights before.

Christopher eagerly put on his hat and tailed coat, and wrote a legend announcing that because of unavoidable matters his shop would be closed for a few hours, which he stuck upon the door; then he turned the key in the lock with care and, with mademoiselle at his side, proceeded in the direction of Pump Court. This was a wide court, of no great depth, with three broad-fronted houses on each side of it, and a cool flagged space between; and in the center stood the pump, with a tub under its spout, from which the court took its name. There was a little fringe of grass about the edge of each of the houses, and vines climbed the walls; the shutters were green and stood wide; the door- and window-frames were white. Christopher pointed to the sloping roof of one of the houses, where a dormer-window leaned outward.

"That," said the little apothecary, "is Tom Horn's lodgings."

They climbed the wide, solid steps, and at the top of the house knocked upon a door. Tom Horn opened it; he did

not seem at all surprised, but only opened it a great deal wider when he saw who it was.

"Come in," he said. "I am glad to see you."

The room was a very large one and sparsely furnished; on a broad table, with lighted candles set about it, was a great clutter of papers.

"Figures," said Christopher, as he looked down at the papers. "All figures." He looked at Tom Horn and rubbed his own shining crown. "They must be like a spoken language to you."

"Figures are truer and more dependable than a language made of words," said Tom Horn. "The circles come at through them are perfect ones. There is no bending them to other shapes. Words, now, can be wrought to fit both prejudice and unreason."

"That is true," said the little apothecary, and he turned a look upon mademoiselle which told of his admiration for the saying. "That is very true, indeed."

There were bare spaces upon the walls of Tom Horn's lodgings, and pinned there were what looked like maps, but maps such as neither mademoiselle nor Christopher had ever seen before. For about the islands and along the headlands and through the bulk of the sea itself were drawn long lines which curled slowly toward an inevitable roundness. Figures were set down in red ink along these lines, and arrows of blue pointed out their circular, grasping sweep: Upon the mantel was a slim array of books, and mademoiselle, as she looked at their worn sheep bindings and their inked-in titles, saw that astronomy, navigation, and geometry were the matters there dealt with.

The place had a clean, bare look; the single twinkling light in the court could be seen from the high window; a thrush on an open perch stirred now and then and chirped sleepily; and a wooden-wheeled clock ticked and grumbled

in its high case. Mademoiselle listened to the two men for a space after they had settled down, and then, in a silence between them, she spoke to Tom Horn.

"Mr. Dent has told me of the interest he feels in your theory of tides and currents, and especially in how they might have affected the ship *Rufus Stevens*. And we have come to-night to hear more of it, if you are of the mind to tell it."

"We have a curiosity concerning your idea," said Christopher cautiously. "And so, if there is any more to tell, we beg of you to tell it plainly, for it may be a thought with a deal of value, and which could be put to a practical use."

Never had Tom Horn looked so worn and fragile as he did at that moment, sitting with the mass of calculations before him and with the candle-light upon him; never before had the strange, luminous quality that he threw off been so pronounced, never had the odd, hopeful look in his eyes shown so fully through their fixed despair.

"I will say what I can," he said, "and that is not much; for no man can speak with authority on things urged by powers whose weight he can only surmise. But this I know: In the south region of the world, the edge of Africa and that of South America make the two sides of a vast throat, and through this the waters warmed by the tropics force themselves northward. The current clings to the American side and, when opposite the mouth of the Amazon, begins to thicken. It sweeps between Trinidad and the Barbados into the Carribbean; it rounds the West Indies to the south and curves into the gulf, and then, out and away, along the North American coast."

"And holds all its parts to itself on the way," marveled Christopher. "That is wonderful, indeed. It is as though it were a vast living thing."

"From the north," said Tom Horn, and he pointed a long finger at one of the maps on the wall, "comes a second cur-

rent, cold, holding to the coast and meeting the warm current where the ocean's bed rises so abruptly off Newfoundland. Here the two merge and swing off toward the east. But the land turns them south; holding to the African rim they flow back through the great throat, completing the circle. And somewhere inside that circle," said Tom Horn, "is the Sargasso; it lies to the south of the Azores, to the west of the Canaries, and northwest of the Cape Verde Islands, a vast pool of slack water; and into it is drawn all those things which the currents have ravished from the world."

"It is your thought, then," said mademoiselle, "that the ship *Rufus Stevens*, if still afloat, may have fallen into the grip of this great circle. But might it not be that the storm blew her out of reach of the currents? Who can say what happened in a great wind like that?"

Tom Horn took one of the sheets from the table.

"It was Captain Frisbee who saw the ship. And the spot where he saw her, made by dead reckoning, is set down here. It was three in the afternoon, and the wind was blowing from the southwest. Captain Frisbee told me these things himself," said Tom Horn. "I went to him and asked. And he judged that the gale was blowing at seventy miles an hour, and held so until nightfall on the following day, when it had blown itself out. That gives twenty-seven hours of wicked weather, the wind blowing into the east by north all the time.

"With that body of wind," the clerk went on, "and that number of hours, a ship without masts or sails can be figured to have been driven so many leagues. And my calculations show me that when the storm fell the *Rufus Stevens* lay at or near this spot on the ocean's water," and he picked the place out on the paper with his finger, "at or near this spot, which is south of the Azores, and on the inner rim of the great circle. And being so situated, and without help," said Tom

Horn, "nothing can prevent her from drifting into the Grassy Sea."

"Could it not be," said Christopher Dent, "that she might have settled into some other current after the wind fell, and so floated away in another direction?"

"One whole year I drifted in the *William and Mary*," said Tom Horn. "Each day of that year I marked down in a book, and underneath I wrote what I saw in the sea and in the sky. The *William and Mary* was a good ship, but misfortune touched her. Time has told me that it was not the misfortune of chance; men had to do with it; there was a purpose in it; but what, or how, I could never contrive. The ship was down by the head when they left her; they desired me to get into a boat with the second mate, Ezra Hardy, who was a plain, honest man. But I said I would stay with the ship. And that boat, with all who were in her, was never heard of again."

"And the others?" asked Christopher Dent.

"The boat of the captain was a strong one," said Tom Horn. "And so, was the first mate's. They lived: oh, yes, that was seen to. They lived buoyantly through the storm."

"Do you say," and mademoiselle's voice shook, "that you refused to leave the ship because you believed the second mate's boat was meant to go down?"

"First," said Tom Horn, "I desired to remain with the cargo while there was a chance of saving it. Second," and he whispered this, "it was as you say."

"Now, God save us!" said Christopher Dent in horror. "God in His Heaven save us!"

"I watched the sea all that day," said the clerk, "and I listened through the night; for it was heavy in my mind that the captain and first mate would return. For I knew the men who were in their boats,—hardy, desperate, unsparing men,—and I feared for my life."

"They did not return!" said the little apothecary. "Oh, no, I trust not! I dread to think otherwise."

"The drifting water took the hulk, weighted as it was," said Tom Horn; "with her forecastle down and her forward hatch almost under, the great circle took her and carried her away; and so the villains lost all track of her, and I drifted into the lonely sea. The sun shone through a haze," said the clerk; "its color was russet and streaked with white; so still was the air I saw spirals of mist, like ropes, lowered from the sky. On every side the sea was like a grassy field; I saw planks and spars lying on what seemed solid ground; great birds sat and watched me as though waiting for the time when I should die. There was a ghastly kind of vegetation: pallid, slimy plants,—bloodless,—like things that had grown in the dark; they were horrible to see and more horrible to touch. And," said Tom Horn, "a monstrous life stirred beneath the green scum of the sea. Since time began, God's hand has been turned to many dreadful tasks; but He has hidden them from most men's eyes."

"We will grant," said the girl, "that a ship, circumstanced as you believe the *Rufus Stevens* was at the end of the storm, must have fallen into the grasp of the great current and so came, or will come, to the Grassy Sea. But before going so far we must assure ourselves she remained afloat."

"Any one who watched her building," said Tom Horn, "must have seen she was a strong vessel. Siddons is an honest man; he never slights a task; he does honest, sound work. Live-oak is tough; hammered iron does not give readily; the ship was new, and, though the masts were out of her when Frisbee saw her, the decks were sound and the hatches fast down. I questioned him about that, and he was quite sure. The ship was like a cask," said Tom Horn. "The sea could not harm her, there being nothing to dash

her against. Mark me! she is adrift at this moment in the slimy grass of that silent place; and her cargo is as dry and safe as it would be if it were in a merchant's storehouse."

Mademoiselle's hands trembled, but her voice was steady as she said:

"Would it be possible to find this strange ocean back-water? Could you—could any one—take a ship into it?"

"South of the Azores," said Tom Horn, "northwest of the Cape Verdes, and west of the Canaries." He nodded his head. "I could find my way back to it," said he. "Through all the vast spaces of the sea I could find my way back there, for it is so fixed in my mind that the very sky above it would be known to me if I once lifted it to the horizon-line."

"Anthony Stevens!" said mademoiselle to Christopher. "He must be told!"

"But his health!" protested the little apothecary.

"This will be health to him," said the girl. "This news would put life in him if he stood on the verge of the grave."

"Very well. He shall be told," said Christopher. "He shall be told, and at once."

XXXVII

THE movements of the brig which hung so close to shore, and which prowled up and down so mysteriously, greatly interested Anthony Stevens. Late in the day, after the episode of the wrecked long-boat, he saw the vessel at anchor a few miles out and just to the south of the shoals; a small boat had put out from her and was weaving in and out slowly apparently searching for a channel to the inlet.

She was still there next morning, riding at anchor, and before noon two boats had put away from her and engaged in the same weaving in and out. At evening Anthony baked his bread on the coals and roasted a fish; he ate his supper at the window and then tidily washed and put away his gear. He read for an hour or two by candle-light; and about ten o'clock, when he'd made up his mind for bed, he stepped out for a breath of cool air. The night was quiet; the sky carried thousands of stars; through a space between two dunes he could see the surf, thick with phosphorus, breaking brilliantly on the sand. The moon was lifting out of the sea—a great, yellow moon; he moved toward the beach; for a time the light was hidden by a high dune; then the moon's rim began to rise above it, enormous, like a wide eye searching the quiet world. Higher and higher it lifted, the light bathing the sand-hills mysteriously; half of it was now above the line of the dune, and suddenly, against its shining face, Anthony saw a movement. There were two figures,—men,—and they stood upon the top of the hill with

the half-moon behind them; their heads were together as though they were conversing, and one of them lifted a hand and pointed out to sea.

At once Anthony was in motion; softly he stepped through the sand, and climbed the side of the hill. The two men stood with their backs to him, their eyes fixed upon the sea. There lay the brig in the track of the moon; and it was at this they were pointing. When Anthony spoke they turned; and he was amazed to see Tom Horn and Christopher Dent.

"We reached the town beyond at nightfall and crossed the bay in a skiff," said Christopher. "We came to see you; we have a message."

Tom Horn was studying the brig once more.

"I know her well," he said. "She belongs to the Simpsons and has the look of having been rigged by a landsman."

"She 's been haunting the coast," said Anthony.

Tom Horn laughed, and he pointed away to the north-east.

"There are the shoals," he said. "There are the white ghosts. That 's why the brig's people are here. They know every set of teeth on the coast." He looked at Anthony. "Have they been searching?"

"They have had boats out," said the young man.

Tom Horn nodded.

"Such as they take nothing for granted. No ship is to be seen broken on the bars but they know what a great storm can do; they know how it can rend its victim, and then cover it with the smothering sand."

Anthony frowned out at the brig, lying so peacefully in the white track of the moon.

"They set out to find a wreck, then?" he said.

"A month ago," said Tom Horn. "They manned yonder vessel for no other purpose than to pick and search along the coast. This shoal was one they had well in the front

of their minds. And the hulk they hope to sight is that of the *Rufus Stevens*."

All three stood looking out at the vessel across the flattened line of surf.

"What men are aboard her?" asked Anthony.

"Those whom you have in your mind," said the clerk. "They could be no other."

Anthony continued to hold the brig with his eye; his mind was dark and active, and anger was lifting in it.

"Mademoiselle desired that word be brought you," said Christopher to the young man.

"Of this?" said Anthony, and he pointed to the vessel.

"Oh, no. She knows nothing of either the brig or her business," said the little apothecary. "Her message is more urgent than that. It will open your eyes," prophesied Christopher, confidently. He took a letter from his pocket and gave it to Anthony. "But let us go where you can read it quietly," said he. "And afterwards we can talk; for you'll have many questions to ask, I know, and Tom Horn will have a deal of answering to do to satisfy you."

So they descended the dune; a brace of candles were lighted in the cabin, and the three sat down at the table. Anthony read mademoiselle's letter; his muscles grew tight and his blood began to race; he read it once more, then quietly placed it upon the table and, looking at Tom Horn, said:

"Tell me what you have told her."

The clerk once more stated his beliefs, and his reasons for holding to them; Christopher added those details which escaped the other; Anthony listened, and his eyes glowed; a slow smile crept to the corners of his mouth, but got no farther.

"Safe!" said he, when the man had done. "Safe, with the cargo unharmed; lying quiet and waiting."

"Yes," said Tom Horn.

"And you can point the nose of a vessel toward this strange sea?"

"I would engage to put you alongside the ship itself," said Tom Horn.

Anthony's eyes narrowed. These were high words, and he was one to be moved little by sounds, no matter how brave. But Tom Horn was peculiar. Inside that odd exterior, a wisdom worked which was not common. Tom Horn, alone, of all who felt the burrowing under Rufus Stevens' Sons, had pointed out the runways of the rats. He had said strange things; and facts had sprung up to bear him out. There was a long silence; and then Anthony said:

"A vessel to make the search! How is one to be had?"

Thrilled, Christopher leaned across the table.

"Mademoiselle bade me say," said he, "that she 'll be waiting and will have a ship at her call."

Anthony looked at the little apothecary; then the smile crept forward from the corners of his mouth, and his lips parted in a laugh.

"Mademoiselle grows better and better," he said. He turned a look upon the broad face of his watch, which hung upon the wall. "I have bedding enough for us all," he said. "So let's turn to it and get some sleep. To-morrow we take the track back to the city."

XXXVIII

THEY were astir early in the morning and had their breakfast. The brig was still in sight, but some distance to the northeast, as Christopher reported after a look through one of the windows. And as they ate Anthony nodded toward the pistol, which still hung upon the wall.

"I have not had occasion to use it," said he. "But, with those gentlemen in the offing, there is no telling what might have come about in the long run."

Tom Horn looked from the weapon to Anthony.

"No man's life is safe if he places it between these villains and their will," he said.

"They are spending a deal of time loitering along the coast," said Christopher. "Of what service would it be to them to find the ruins of a ship piled upon a bar?"

"They would then know that ship's fate," said Tom Horn. "It would be shown to them that they need seek no further."

Christopher looked at the odd clerk with round eyes.

"This, then," said he, "is only a beginning of their search?"

"The prize is a rich one," said Tom Horn. "They'd hunt the seas of the world if they thought they might come upon it."

All that was readily portable of Anthony's effects was carried to the boat which had brought Christopher and Tom to the island; and by mid-morning they hoisted sail and headed for the mainland. Here the baggage was transferred to a wagon, and they were on their way through the barrens,

on the first stretch of sand tracks toward the city. By hard traveling they accomplished the distance by the third morning, and Anthony went at once to his lodgings. It was a gorgeous, blowy July day; the sun was in Sassafras Street; the scent of the little gardens round about rose to him as he raised his windows; all the world seemed open before him, and he felt a mounting life in his body that would carry him through it. He was shaving by a window, with a mirror propped against a hat-box, when a knock came upon the door.

"Come in," said Anthony, and Mr. Sparhawk, neat, precise, and looking more like a wise old bird than ever, walked into the room.

"Why, this is a splendid surprise, indeed," said the little gentleman. "I had expected you, it's true, for there was reason to think you'd be attracted back to town; but such immediate action in the matter is quite heartening, and charming."

He shook Anthony's hand, and sat down, crossed his silk-stockinged legs, and his alert gaze ran over the young man from head to foot. The bronzed, rugged health that he saw, the long, powerful muscles under the close-fitting shirt, caused him to nod with approval; the brisk, sure movements and the snapping light of the eyes brought a smile to the little gentleman's face—a smile of assurance and content.

"You had the news of my return very quickly," said Anthony, as he proceeded with his shaving at the window.

"Christopher Dent came in upon me while I was still at breakfast," said Mr. Sparhawk. "A kindly, good soul! I appreciate Christopher very much. And after he left me he was off to Mademoiselle Lafargue with his tidings. He anticipated great excitement there, I know."

"You have heard this theory of Tom Horn's regarding the ship *Rufus Stevens*?" Anthony held the razor suspended

as he asked this question, and his soap-covered face was turned toward Mr Sparhawk.

The precise little gentleman put down his hat carefully; and then he answered:

"Mademoiselle Lafargue brought the matter to my attention some days ago. She attached much value to it."

"And you?" said Anthony.

"I have known Tom Horn a long time," said Mr. Sparhawk. "A very long time. He is a person of strange moods; many look on him as a man distraught, but I have never been convinced that he is so. For, do you see," and Mr. Sparhawk nodded, quite firmly, "though his manner is odd and his method of expression is not usual, there is much matter in his sayings. He has a mind that thinks; though, as I've said before, many do not credit it."

"Have any steps been taken in this matter?" asked Anthony.

Mr. Sparhawk put his head to one side in the way that gave him the bird-like look.

"No doubt you'll be calling at the Larfargues' before the day is out," said he. "And, if so, mademoiselle will tell you what has been done."

Anthony rasped at his beard with a not over-sharp razor.

"I had it in my mind to visit them early in the day," said he.

"Very good," said the old gentleman. "As she knows you've come back to town, no doubt she'll be at home."

Mr Sparhawk then fell into talk of many things; most of them had to do with the clouded affairs of Rufus Stevens' Sons, and the plans and purposes of those reasonable creditors who had its destiny in charge.

"A deal is due you and Mr Crousillat for your interest," said Anthony. "You have gone much out of your way to do a kindly thing."

“Why, as to that,” said Mr. Sparhawk, “there are many who would do as we have done,—more especially as I have done,—had the same urge induced them forward.”

Anthony, glancing over his shoulder, nodded soberly. And Mr. Sparhawk went on to tell all the steps that had been taken to bring some degree of order out of the ruin. It was a bleak, dispiriting catalogue; the track of events wound through gloomy places; there were voids which had been filled with promises; there were moneys paid out of which there was no accounting; there were debts due or owing which had never been written down; there were passages dull with stupidity, or foul with malpractice; and Anthony grew a little sick as he listened; for it was familiar ground; it had broken him before, and he felt it could break him again. He tried to shut his ears to the dull hammering of Mr. Sparhawk’s facts. The clever parrying of that little gentleman, or of old Mr. Crousillat, in some close engagements of wits, or their sudden and skilful assault upon some detected plunderer, brought nothing but pain to Anthony’s mind; for he could think only of his own struggles and defeats in that same place of gloom, of dismal suspicion, of maddening unreality. He felt as a trapped wolf might feel, brought back to the place of its disaster.

And he wanted no more of it! He fervently wanted no more of it. A struggle he did not mind; indeed, he welcomed it; but it must be a struggle with things seen, with men or events with which one might come in open contact. This ship, now—adrift, lost, crammed with a treasure of merchandise! She was a thing to make his nerves crackle and his blood leap. His mind could value the danger she was in, if the sea held her at all—danger at the hands of wandering or purposeful men, in the crush of winds and seas, in the heart of a vast silence, and a desolation almost impossible to penetrate. With a sound deck under him, a

few resourceful hands to carry out his orders, and the far seas ahead! That would be a man's part. He'd rise to that. But to be like a mole, digging, digging in the dark! He'd have no more of it! He could stand no more of it!

Mr. Sparhawk stayed for an hour and talked. The things he said were needful things, though unpleasant; and Anthony, understanding this, tried to bear with them. But, when the little man finally took his leave, the young one drew a deep breath and at once began to change his dress, preparatory to his day's affairs.

Within an hour he was at the Lafargues' lodgings. Both mademoiselle and her father were awaiting him.

"It is generous of you to come back to the city so promptly," said Monsieur Lafargue eagerly.

"Are not my interests involved?" asked Anthony. "When a chance is shown me finally to accomplish a thing for which I once strove and failed, could I stand still and see it pass?"

"You think, then," said the girl, her eyes shining, "that there is a chance?"

"It is a strange thing," said Anthony. "A strange thing, indeed. But, then, why not? If we stopped because things were not usual, our hands would hang at our sides in all the important turnings of our lives."

"That a ship could live through a storm like that, seems impossible," said Monsieur Lafargue.

"Others did, and came into port," said mademoiselle.

"True." Monsieur Lafargue stroked his shaven chin. "True, indeed. But I cannot forget the *Rufus Stevens* was already a wreck when seen."

"Her masts were gone," said Anthony. "That is always grave; but it is not necessarily fatal. I have seen vessels so stricken which have lived boldly; I myself was once in a ship so circumstanced; she was battered and beaten by the

sea for days; but she held together and sailed many a voyage afterwards."

"Christopher was greatly excited," said mademoiselle, "and he came to me with the story of what Tom Horn had said; he was perplexed and did not know what to believe. And I was in the same state of mind, even after I'd talked to the man himself and written the letter asking you to return. I wanted to believe and accept it all as an actual thing," she said, "for it seemed the only hope left. But it was not until I saw Mr. Sparhawk that my mind became settled."

Anthony looked at her questioningly; he recalled the attitude of that same little gentleman an hour before, the cock of his head, and the tolerant tone with which he spoke of Tom Horn and his theory.

"His disbelief fixed your mind in opposition, then?" said Anthony.

"Disbelief!" The girl laughed, her beautiful teeth flashing. "He was as credulous as a child. He walked the floor; he took great quantities of snuff; he at once began to plan how moneys might be had to equip a vessel to be sent searching the seas."

Anthony also laughed. The cunning of the dapper little fox! Not once had he shown even a trace of actual belief; and yet there he was, mad to set forward, and hoping, Anthony had no doubt, with the best of them!

"The money was easily had; those who had interests in the cargo were willing to chance something; the larger creditors were of a like mind; this was all spoken of secretly, and the sums gathered in the same way. And so there is a small vessel, all ready for sea, lying in Pegg Run; and you are to be her master if you care to undertake the task."

"There is no task in the world at this moment that I am so eager for," said Anthony. "And, thank God, it's one

for which I feel fitted. It 's not like the mousing, grubbing work I was compelled to do in the counting-room, trying to hold off the things that I see now were bound to come."

They talked of the prospects for an early beginning; of the storing of the vessel, which, so it seemed, was already under way, the chances for slipping out to sea with no one the wiser. And then they left the house and walked north on Water Street until they reached Pegg Run; and the girl pointed out to Anthony a trim little schooner, fit, and fresh with paint, her tall masts telling of a fine spread of sail, and her strong hull bending into the curving sweep of speed. The young man glowed at sight of the craft; she was so like the one he would have selected himself for the work ahead of him that it might well have been his will, acting through another, when she was fixed upon.

"You like her?" asked the girl.

"She 's a fine, upstanding craft," said Anthony, "roomy, with plenty of space for a press of wind, and I have no doubt, sails well in most weathers. She 'll ride like a duck; I know that buoyant look."

"I 'm glad," said mademoiselle. "I tried to please you."

His eyes met hers, and he held them steadily.

"You have pleased me in more than that," said Anthony.

"One by one I have been storing the instances away in my mind; some day I shall tell you what they are."

There was an open look in his eye that stopped the speech on her lips: a flush came into her face, and her own eyes were very bright as she turned her head, so that he might not see. The tackle from the schooner's foremast strained and whined through the blocks; some negroes, chanting monotonously, laid their weight against the capstan bars.

"In two days," said the girl, "she will be ready."

"In two days," said Anthony, "she will be gone."

XXXIX

IT was in less than two days that the last keg and case was received on board and the last carpenter packed his kit and left the schooner; in the meantime Anthony made calculations as to the hands needed to man her and set about procuring them. Almost the first person he met, at a tavern frequented by sailors in Front Street, was Corkery, who had been mate in Rufus Stevens' Sons' ship *General Stark*. And in an instant Anthony had him at the far end of the bar, a mug of beer before each of them, and was explaining his errand—or as much of it as the occasion seemed to need.

“A crew?” said Corkery; “four men, a cook, a mate? A short voyage and good pay? What ship?”

“The schooner *Roebuck*,” said Anthony.

Corkery nodded.

“I know her,” he said. “Owned by Crousillat, and lately engaged in the trade with Havana.” He took a draft of the beer. “About the mate, now: I ’m looking for a ship myself, and this voyage might fit me well if you ’d be inclined to have me.”

“The papers are waiting for your name,” said Anthony, his eyes snapping, for he felt the value of the man. “And, now, the others.”

“A quiet crew, you say,” said Corkery thoughtfully; “one that goes about its affairs, gives its time to handling the ship, and leaves all other matters to its officers. Such should be found readily enough. When do you sail?”

"To-morrow," replied Anthony.

"Where bound?" asked the mate.

"That," said Anthony, "I do not yet know."

Corkery looked surprised; but he took another draft of the good beer and said:

"Put it in my hands, and I'll have your men on board by night."

Willingly Anthony did so and gave himself to other matters. Late in the day he had his effects carried to the wharf in Pegg Run and placed on board. At almost the same time Tom Horn arrived with his bedding in a roll, and his other belongings in a stout chest. He looked into Anthony's cabin, after stowing these, and nodded approval of the little array of muskets and pistols and stout hangers which he saw on the wall.

"The forehanded man is the least likely to meet danger," he said. "Your grandfather never allowed a ship to sail without plenty of powder and ball, and a musket to a man; his seamen always knew how to load and fire them; and that is an example many a ship-owner could follow with profit."

Corkery reached the vessel by nightfall as he had said he would, and with him were the hands. By the light of a lantern swinging amidships, Anthony watched the men bear their dunnage aboard, inspect their new ship, and then disappear into the forecastle.

"Two of them are off a Dutch ship just in from the East," said Corkery. "I don't know them, but they have the name of good seamen; the other two sailed under me in one of your uncle's brigs a few years ago. The cook is a mulatto, as you've seen, a clever man, and not above lending a hand when required in other matters."

"We should have a carpenter," said Anthony, "but I suppose, if the need of one is pressing, we can make shift between us."

Corkery, as an active mate should, soon had his company divided into watches and employed about the schooner. And, having seen things all right and prospering, Anthony went ashore. At Christopher Dent's he bade the little apothecary good-by.

"Good fortune!" said Christopher. "And a swift return. I have, with discretion, mind you, spoken with several people about the *Roebuck*. She has the name of a lucky ship. So you have that much in your favor, at least. I wish I were going with you; but," wistfully, "I would n't be of much use in such an enterprise." He shook Anthony's hand again. "I feel," he said, "that you are to return with great credit. Every night I shall mark the stars that must hang above your ship; and I'll try to read from them what is before you."

When Anthony was shown into the sitting-room of Monsieur Lafargue, mademoiselle was there with her father, and Mr. Sparhawk sat comfortably in a big chair. Some trunks, corded and ready, rested near the head of the stairs.

"Well," said Mr. Sparhawk, after the visitor had been greeted and had taken a chair. "You are busy making ready, I suppose?"

"The company is aboard," said Anthony. "And we'll drop down the river with the next tide."

Mr. Sparhawk applauded this news with soft pattering hands.

"Brisk work!" praised he. "Oh, excellent!"

"When does the tide turn?" asked Mademoiselle Lafargue.

"At three in the morning," said Anthony.

"You will have time for a few hours' sleep," said Monsieur Lafargue to mademoiselle. "But your baggage had better be sent aboard at once."

Anthony looked from one to the other; then he turned his

gaze upon Mr. Sparhawk. The little gentleman spoke in his most persuasive voice.

"I trust," said he, "that the *Roebuck* is as roomy as she looks, and that you have managed to set apart quarters that will be reasonably comfortable for mademoiselle."

"For mademoiselle!" said Anthony, astonished.

"Now, God bless my soul!" said Mr. Sparhawk regretfully. "How could I have been so neglectful? I have not told him," to Monsieur Lafargue. "How can you forgive me?" to mademoiselle.

"Not told him!" said mademoiselle, her face crimson.

"I ask your pardon," said Mr. Sparhawk. He waved a hand helplessly. "There is no possible excuse that I can offer." For all he seemed so distressed, there was, so Anthony thought, a gleam at the back of his eye that was self-possessed enough. "We had arranged it all between us," said Mr. Sparhawk to Anthony, "that Mademoiselle Lafargue was to sail with you; and it was further arranged that I make you acquainted with our purpose, which, stupidly enough, I have not done."

"There is no place for a woman in such an expedition," said Anthony. He looked at the girl, who had now arisen and was standing by her father's chair, tall, straight, wonderful. It rose in his heart to say that he was a fool; that there was a place for her anywhere; that, if it were given him to do, he 'd make a place for her—and a safe place—at the very feet of peril itself. But he did not say it. He only looked at her stubbornly, and denied her permission to put foot on the *Roebuck*. But she said nothing; it was Mr. Sparhawk who spoke.

"It would be as well," said the little gentleman, "to hear our reasons for this." He crossed his legs and dandled one foot, while he looked at Anthony mildly. "It is customary," he proceeded, "when a ship puts to sea to have on board

of her a person who represents the owners of the cargo. The presence of this person also serves the owners and officers of the ship; because, in case of unavoidable mischance, he is present as a witness and can absolve them from blame. Of course," and Mr. Sparhawk gestured lightly, "the *Roebuck* carries no cargo out; but it is the hope of those who send her, the creditors of Rufus Stevens' Sons, that she will return with a most valuable one. It would be a useful thing if there were some one on board to receive this merchandise and set down, as far as might be, a report of its conditions."

"And it is your thought to send a girl to fill that office?" said Anthony, frowning. "A ship like this, and bound upon the errand this one's to set out on, stands to meet peril of more than the usual kind. If a supercargo must be sent, let it be a man, and one used to the sea and its mishaps."

"Do not forget," said Mr. Sparhawk, "that we who engage in this enterprise must keep it secret. If the news of the *Roebuck's* purpose got out, the sea would be covered with sail, and each ship would be seeking to salvage the *Rufus Stevens*. So we must guard our intention; we must trust no one. I would go with you, but matters of business press; monsieur is not in good health; the only person available in whom the creditors have complete confidence is mademoiselle; so," and Mr. Sparhawk pursed his lips and raised his brows, "what are we to do?"

The stubborn answer was in Anthony's mouth; but before it was spoken he chanced to look at the girl. She was so still; there was such spirited beauty in her fine eyes; her color was wonderful; her attitude was of eager desire; and yet she held herself proudly. A rush of feeling came smothering into the young man's mind; he tried to fight it back, but could not. Then he felt very quiet; peace followed where resentment had been; there was a warm joy; he

admired the cleverness of Mr. Sparhawk in making it so impossible to refuse. His eyes drank her in; there was a surprise, an incredulous amazement, that he should have ever held her off, that he had been resolved to leave her behind, when everything favored her going with him.

"I shall have your trunks taken on board," said he to the girl. "And you must follow well before the tide swings."

"Yes, Captain Stevens," she said.

He caught the smile hidden behind the words and smiled himself. And for the first time since the night at the Crooked Billet the bitter wind that blew between them died completely down; he placed her chair for her, and drew his own toward it; and he talked to her in a new tone, with confidence and spirit; she sat and listened, and the hands which were folded in her lap trembled ever so little, and her eyes were even brighter than before.

XL

THE *Roebuck* let go her moorings in the gray of the July morning; one of the boats towed her out of the run and into the river; then under mainsail, topsail, and jibs she pointed her nose downstream on the tedious journey to the capes. The tide ran out strongly, and the wind favored the vessel's progress; she had dropped the city behind by sun-up, the flats went by, and she picked up the towns on the river-bank one by one. The bay opened out late in the afternoon; the mate marked the lights of Lewes well into the night; and by morning they were at sea, under full sail and headed directly east.

The mulatto proved a good cook, and the breakfast he brought into the main cabin was excellent and plentiful. There was a large cut of Westphalia ham upon a broad platter, hot, candied, and delicious; there was a dish of rice like a hillock of snow, ship's biscuit, and steaming chocolate in a tall, slim pot.

"We are to be well fed, at all events," said Anthony, as he sat to the breakfast, with satisfaction. Mademoiselle and Tom Horn had been seated before he came in, and the clerk had a chart, marked in red and blue and black ink, upon the table between them. "The schooner is pointed due east," said Anthony. "Corkery tells me those were your directions."

"East, on the inner skirt of the circle until we reach the Azores," said Tom Horn, pointing to the characters on his chart and following them with a finger. "Then south to the Sargasso."

Mademoiselle, as she followed the tracing finger, bent forward; and, as it stopped at the region where lay the sea of grass, she saw its place was marked by a widening circle of skulls. She shivered a little and drew back.

"With the wind holding," said Anthony, "We should raise the Azores in two weeks."

"We must cling to the inner rim of the circle," said Tom Horn, still with his finger on the chart, "for all things carried by the current drift toward its center; the moon and the running tides and the turning of the world draw them. And we must follow the circle to the place where it begins to bend to the south; the hulk we seek may have been delayed in its passage, for no man knows what the sea will do, and no one can judge the mysteries of the wind."

All through the breakfast, Anthony and mademoiselle talked with Tom Horn, and more than one of his peculiar charts came to the table while they sat there; then the two went on deck, leaving the man poring over his figures, his signs, and his curving lines. The morning was sparkling: the west wind pushed boisterously in the sails, and the little schooner leaped ahead. Corkery approached from amidships, at a look from Anthony.

"How does she set into her work?" asked the young man.

"As ably as a craft twice her bulk," said the mate. "This is no narrow spread of sail," with a look up at the strong, weather-stained canvas, "and yet see how steadily she stands under it."

The *Roebuck* slipped easily up the long sides of the sea, her sharp prow split its crests, and then she'd sleek jauntily down into the vast hollows, flirting the water from her like a duck. The sky was a rare color, with racing clouds upon its breast; the sun lifted higher and higher, and the gleam of the sea grew brighter, throwing back the sky's own blue, the waves thinning to a green and breaking into a sudden,

hissing white. The face of mademoiselle was filled with wonder.

"I have never before been to sea in a little ship," she said, "and so I have not known what being at sea means." Her eyes swept the sky and heaving water; she breathed in the wonderful, singing air; her body swayed with the spring of the craft beneath her. "It is glorious!" she said.

Anthony nodded: *he* did not look at the sea and sky; he looked at *her*. And he said:

"Yes, it is glorious."

The full west wind held and blew the *Roebuck* before it all that day; it whistled sharply through the night, and Anthony, whose watch it was on deck stripped the schooner of a part of her sail. The second morning saw the sea running grayer and longer; the sky was steely, and the sun was hidden. This held for twenty-four hours; then the wind hauled around to the east and scraped the sky's gray into mountains of black; the rain and wind lashed about, and the sea leaped to meet them; the schooner, under topsail and jib, was tossed like a chip, but she held stanchly upright and fought her way through, the blow scarcely wetting her decks. At the end of the fourth day out, Anthony, who stood near the helmsman, mademoiselle at his side, saw a blue gleam through the sober sky.

"The sun will shine to-morrow," he said, "and the sea will run down during the night."

"I am almost sorry," she said. "The angry sea is amazing; I'm afraid I shall not like it, smiling, as greatly as I did before."

As Anthony foretold, the wind slackened during the night and the sea ran down; the sun rose, huge and yellow, in the morning, and the sky bent lightly to the water on the horizon's edge. The wind continued good and from the southwest; the schooner heeled a little to it, her sails bulging

full; and either Anthony or Corkery constantly walked the deck. But no eye on board was as watchful as Tom Horn's, as those smooth, rolling days at sea slipped by. He'd take his place in the bow, early of a morning, and there he'd stay with intent face until far into the night. The water racing past the vessel's side seemed to fascinate him; he'd brood over its passage, wearing a strange look; and as the earth slowly turned, giving a new facet to the sun's warmth, the odd clerk would watch its progress in wonder and in silence.

The lowering sun, almost level in the west, one evening caught an object to the east and held it glittering.

"St. Michael's," said Anthony, searching the spot with a glass.

The rising of the Azores caused a deal of excitement in Tom Horn. He came aft to where Anthony stood, and the young man felt a shaking hand upon his arm.

"South," said Tom Horn. "South, and a trifle to the west, the merest trifle; for that is as the waters run. The ship may be in those seas," and he pointed to starboard: "she may be drifting there, still outside the rim of dead things. We must watch, night and day; we must watch!"

The *Roebuck* was headed south, and so held for a week; there followed a succession of light winds; they made but little headway; and with each day the sea grew quieter; there seemed a gathering of drift on the surface; the sky was shot with yellow; the dulled sun threw off a sweltering heat. At last the sails hung idle; rocking gently, the schooner was borne on through a thickening sea.

"Slowly," said Tom Horn, "very slowly." He gazed about over the forbidding waters, a look that seemed both exaltation and fear, in his strange eyes. "It was about here that the *William and Mary* first touched the edge of that strange place," he said. "She drifted as we are drifting;

sometimes it seemed that she did not move at all. But she came to it at last, as all helpless things must come to it when once the circle draws them. Without wind we are as helpless as she was," said Tom Horn. "Just as helpless. And we are being carried on, as she was carried on, and as the *Rufus Stevens* is being carried on, somewhere outside our vision."

Corkery, who stood by, and heard the man's words, cocked an eye after him as he went forward; and he said to Anthony:

"He's worse than I ever saw him before. I've heard say he was out of balance, but up to now I have noticed only that he kept stiller than most."

"He is excited," said Anthony. "This region brings up memories of certain suffering he's gone through."

Corkery said nothing for a space, and his keen eye went backward and forward over the sluggish sea. Then he spoke:

"You have n't said what your meaning is in this voyage, and I have n't asked any questions. But in the last few days I've come to see that our friend there," and he nodded toward Tom Horn, who had taken his accustomed place in the bow, "has something to do with it; and so I bid you look to your facts. Even now we are in strange seas; and we're headed for stranger still."

Anthony nodded.

"The ship is commissioned for an errand out of the common," he said. "And we are headed now as I intended to head from the first."

Corkery looked at the sky to the north, and then at the limp sails.

"We'll have a stir of wind in a little," he said. "And I'll be pleased enough when it comes."

But the breeze was a light one, and, though it huddled

into the sails, it increased the schooner's pace but little. Mademoiselle Lafargue, who had come on deck, gazed out across the water with its masses of weed and its bits of wreckage.

"I had been trying to read," she said. "But there is something oppressive in the air, and I could not. So I sat and looked out at the port; the sea looks strange, and the birds that hover about are stranger still."

She pointed to where some dirty, evil-looking fowl hung, poised, near the schooner; their great wings seldom stirred, and their narrow eyes were fixed upon the *Roebuck*.

"Tom Horn has told me of those," said Anthony. "It seems to be a sort of vulture, and, no doubt, there is much drifts into these seas which goes to keeping them sleek."

She shivered as she looked at the birds.

"What can be to the south of us," she said, "when the approach is so full of anxiety? The very air seems poisonous."

"It blows over the grave of many a hope, if all I hear is true," said Anthony. "But let us not think of that. To us it offers a chance of victory; and we can't let our nerves grow slack because of the tales of other men, whether false or true. Ahead is our direction." He looked at her soberly. "And ahead we must go, no matter what foul promises grow in our sight."

She looked into his face; and deep in her woman's eyes was the candor of a child.

"That is like you," she said. "It is very like you. I am ashamed."

"God knows," he said, "I like the place no more than you! Give me clear water, and it may rage as it likes, for that is only natural. But a sea which runs with a kind of slime, and whose birds are eaters of carrion, has no place

in the book of things. Nevertheless," and he nodded to her and smiled, "we 'll move deeper into it; and then I may have occasion to alter my views."

Two weeks passed; often their sails hung idle, while time went completely around the clock; a slow, hot wind sometimes blew; and they held to the south and made what time they might. The drift grew thicker; the weed sometimes choked their progress; a green, stiff sea spread out before them; strange life crept upon it, and the hideous birds perched upon bits of wreckage, much as crows might in a stump-filled field.

In the mists of one morning a cry came from Tom Horn; and Corkery, whose watch on deck it was, advanced toward him. The clerk, trembling and clinging to the forward rail with one hand, was pointing away to the south with the other.

Corkery followed the direction indicated; through the piling formations of mist he saw a vast huddle; it loomed up out of the sea, hung with flying tendrils of fog; a dim light set through its spaces, pale, phosphorescent, unreal.

"Land!" said Corkery. "Land, by God!"

"No," said Tom Horn. "It is the place of my captivity! It is the city of dead ships!"

XLI

THE mate had Anthony on deck directly, and the young man eagerly searched the mists to make out what manner of a place it was that bulked up so out of the sea. In a few moments mademoiselle also appeared; and as she stood with them in the schooner's bow her face was white, but she said nothing.

The sails were motionless; the rotting sea piled against their prow; the air was hot and dull; the mist, veiling the whole region, was like steam.

"The pull of this current promises a deal of discomfort to us if we can't make way against it," said Anthony to the mate.

"I could wish we were well quit of it," said Corkery. "A little farther into the midst of this sea, and it might take more than a wind to help us away again."

"What depth of water does your chart give?" said Anthony, to Tom Horn.

The clerk turned his head but still kept his tight clutch on the rail.

"I so feared what was beneath these waters," he said, "that I never sounded them. But there is a great depth; there must be, because of the dreadful life that swarms there."

"Too much water for an anchor," said the mate. But he called for the lead, nevertheless, and watched fathom after fathom of line run over the side. "As deep a hole as there is in all the sea," he grumbled.

"If every cable in the ship were fastened end to end,"

said Tom Horn, "they 'd do no good. There would be nothing for your anchor to grapple with. It would be like hanging over the rim of the moon, fishing for the world."

Slowly the sun seeped through the mist; then it rent holes in it; the vapor curled forlornly before the light, and lifted away from the surface of the sea. The vague loom ahead now became solid; it took both body and color; it was a huddle of broken ships, crowding together like cattle in a green field. The rotting sea held them; their planks were warped; their seams gaped thirstily. And, as the schooner's company watched, the drift rode the *Roebuck* on; the mass of weed and sea-rubbish turned, and shifted drearily, and seemed to deepen.

As there was no sign of a breeze, Anthony ordered out a boat; three men were put into it, and he took an oar himself; a line was made fast to the schooner, and they lay to the work of pulling her head around. But the mass of weed was too stiff; the stout, ashen oars bent in the thole-pins; but the vessel did not swerve; the boat could make no way; the drift went on, and they went with it. And while the boat was being hoisted in Tom Horn spoke to mademoiselle.

"The circle has tightened; no power can slacken it—no wind—no wash of the sea. It is the grip of the great law, the world's roll, and the force of the planet that guides the tides. It gives nothing up."

"You were once lost in this place," said the girl, her face still pale, but with steady voice. "And you made away from it."

"I was here until my heart died in me," said Tom Horn. "I was here so long that it seemed the very heavens were splashed with slime; and my hope rotted as everything must rot that stays here. Each morning," he said, in his odd way, "the sun lifted out of the east like a threat and hung burning over a ghastly sea. All day I saw dead things or

dead men; I saw shapes rear themselves out of the scum that withered my sight. By night winged horrors drifted across the moon; in the dark there were millions of pale candles, lighted round the coffin of a world that had passed."

The schooner's company was gathered in the waist as Anthony went below; he noted them whispering and nodding, sullen looks upon their faces; and his own was grim as he sat down to his breakfast. Mademoiselle was already at the table. And they ate for some time in silence. The hideous, turgid sea lay flat through the schooner's stern window, and the girl's eyes were fixed upon it. Anthony studied her; the sparkle which had filled her eyes from the time they had put to sea was gone; her face was intent; fear worked beneath her look.

"Tom Horn does not seem to have a mind for his breakfast," said Anthony.

"No," she replied.

She kept her eyes fixed upon the motionless sea; there was another silence.

"And," said the young man, "you do not appear to be greatly inclined to it yourself."

"No," she said again.

"For some days," said Anthony, "I have noted you engaged in talk with Tom. And a little space ago I saw you again, after we'd sighted the wrecks ahead. And I would suggest," continued the young man, "that you not give too much attention to his sayings at this time."

"It is your own word," said the girl, "that of all those with whom you have spoken this man has been nearest the truth."

Anthony poured some wine into a high glass; its amber body picked up a ray of light, bathed joyously in it, and then shot it out, stained and gleaming. And while the young man studied its cheerful message he replied to the girl:

“What you say is fact; I’d be the last to question it. Queer as his way has been, odd and circuitous as his warnings and suggestions, he has often grasped the truth and drawn the darkness from about it. But witness: All these matters dealt with the goings-on at Rufus Stevens’ Sons; they had to do with things of record, with the accounts of the house, with the book of arithmetic. He was, no doubt, soundly trained in those things and so stands straight in them. But this,” and Anthony nodded out the window, “is a region where he once was cast away, where his spirit sank in the stillness, and his blunting mind gave the darkness shapes no man had known. Many say Tom Horn is mad. I don’t know. But if it is so then his distemper took form in this sea; so, when he talks of it, I balance his words with doubt. And if you did the like it would be a careful thing.”

“When he spoke of the chance of finding the ship *Rufus Stevens*, did he not speak of this sea?” asked the girl. “And yet you showed no doubt then; you thought it a thing to follow out with speed and hopefulness.”

“And I still think so,” said Anthony. “For the chance of the ship being somewhere within the great ocean current, and of finally drifting into this slack sea, is a thing which comes of his arithmetic and not of his madness.”

She regarded him quietly for a moment.

“When you wear that look,” she said, “I cannot help but see things as you see them.”

Her hand rested upon the table quite near to him, and his own went out and rested upon it.

“Keep your courage,” he said. “You must not lose it because of the fears of a man whose wits are amiss. Hold to your first thoughts of good fortune, for a look like you wore brings luck to a ship.”

She was smiling now; and there was that brightness in her eyes that tears make.

"I will be brave," she said. "Indeed, I will be more than that," her chin going out much as Anthony's own did on occasions. "I will be helpful."

He looked at her with his heart quickening.

"There is no one who could be more so than you, if you willed it so. Let your soul warm to what's ahead, for only strength of soul can conquer this stark place and bring our journey to a fortunate end."

The sun burned its way across the sky, and the day began to wane; the mists rose once more from the great fields of decaying matter and sent their fanciful plumes into the air.

"We do not seem any nearer to the hulks than we were this morning," said Corkery.

"We approach them slowly," said Tom Horn. "But we are nearer, nevertheless. I was weeks in coming abreast of them. The current is slow here, but it is strong and does not give up. We must not struggle against it. Be warned by me. Flow with it peacefully. Let us give our minds to finding the ship we are in search of; let the current take us deep into the core of the circle; it will take us out again, as it took me after I had learned its secret."

Corkery pointed to the mass of broken ships ahead.

"It has not taken those out," he said.

"They are dead," said Tom Horn. "And they are overborne by other dead; they have no minds to call on God; they have no sails to hold aloft to the winds; and so they remain here, and will remain until they sink, as many have sunk before them, into the thick depths and to horrors that no one has seen."

The sun grew red as it went behind the climbing mist; it grew huge and fiery and shot long, threatening darts across the silent sea; the hideous birds came croaking out of the air and settled heavily upon the broken spars and green, fungus-grown bits of wreckage. Thicker and thicker grew

the mist, and things magnified marvelously; it shook and waved like banners; it arose and floated like clouds.

"It is a wall," said Tom Horn. "It is a vast thing come between heaven and men who are lost. What does it seek to hide?" he asked of Anthony, as the sun's rim dipped below the sea and the shadows suddenly thickened. "What is there in the air above that the malevolence of this dying sea tries to keep from its victims? I once thought," and his voice was now a whisper, "that it might be hope, a something which told of release. I'd hold that in my mind through whole long nights; and comfort came from it for then I'd not seem so completely forsaken and alone."

After this it grew dark; the ship's lights glowed feebly; heavy flights of birds stirred the air; from distant places came queer, deep movements of the water, then long silences. Anthony wrapped mademoiselle in a great cloak to protect her from the damp, and side by side they walked the deck. The binnacle-light threw a glow over the man at the wheel; outside the lamp's radius the mist banked steep and white. Then a wind crept up; in the lantern-light the mist became agitated; it rolled and mounted and sunk; and then it began to drift away. A dim glow showed itself out over the drift. Suddenly mademoiselle said, in a voice of fear:

"Look! The wrecked ships! Some one is aboard them!"

Through the seams and ports of the distant hulks, pale lights were glimmering, illuminating the sea with a ghastly radiance.

"They are 'witch' lights such as one sees in a marsh; a place like the Sargasso would have many of them," said Anthony.

For some time they stood together, watching the silent hulks, and the corpse lights on their decks and rails; then the moon came up, clear, cold, and almost at its full; its rays, glancing upon the shreds of mist, sparkled wanly.

The wind grew more active; it rustled in the sails, as though calling attention to its presence, and Anthony, with the help of the watch, trimmed the canvas to get what good there was in it.

"By morning," said one of the men, "we'll be in that press of wreckage ahead there."

"What wind there is," said Anthony, "will not give us head against this grass and litter; if we move at all it must be forward."

"I've heard tales of this sea," said the other man, putting his weight on the line willingly enough. "It's no place for a human with a heart in his body."

"We'll come safe out of it," said Anthony. "We have sound planks under us, upstanding masts, and a dress of sails. There's wind here, as in other places, and where there's wind and water there a ship can go without a deal a hazard."

The moon's white light bleached the thick top of the sea to a silver; the brittle stars flickered raggedly in their settings of violet; from the topmasts of the *Roebuck* and from her bowsprit leaped little glowing spots of light.

"Mark that!" said one of the hands. "Did you see it?"

"It's a visitation," said the other. "A hand of fire touches our spars; it may be bidding us to go back!"

Anthony laughed.

"If it is a fiery hand," said he, "it is the hand of St. Elmo. And no honest person has anything to fear from him, for, from the sound of him, he was a fine old hero and well intentioned. As for the fire that carries his name it is nothing at all; for it has shown itself on more than one ship I've sailed in, and no harm came to any of them."

It was some time later that mademoiselle went below; Anthony walked the deck through his watch, with the moon sailing high and free in the sky; the strange sea held his

eye; bleached white by the light, it lay flat, motionless; the corpse candles glowed in the hulks; the strange, deep movements of water came now and then from a long way off. About the third hour of his watch, Anthony heard a step at his side. It was Tom Horn.

"I thought you were abed this long time," said the young man.

"No," said the clerk, "I cannot sleep. I must watch."

"Watch?" said Anthony. As he looked at the man, the pale, luminous something which he'd always noticed in him seemed magnified. The white, still moonlight seemed kin to him; he was as strange, as quiet, and as cold.

"There are memories," said Tom Horn, "memories of nights like this; they were nights in which my soul was troubled. In the quiet I heard stirrings that had no place in the world; in the light I saw things God had not sanctioned. It is ill for a man to be alone; and I was alone for a long, long time. At first odd things pass before him—things he has not known; then they become strange; then monstrous. For there is death within life; there is evil within good. Surrounded by other souls, a man is safe; but when he is abandoned, as I was abandoned, when there is no spirit to touch his own in kindness, he is naked to evil things, and God's world is far away."

"God's world is here," said Anthony. "Where sea and sky meet, there He is; no matter how remote the place, or how desolate, God stands there, armed against evil."

The wan moon lighted the clerk's face, and Anthony saw him smile.

"That saying is good; it is the touch of a friendly spirit," he said. "Let two souls be together, and they make each other strong. But let one be alone, as I was alone, let there be no warmth, no kindness, and hope dies. Horrors creep in; the nether world comes close, and the corporal eye, grown

keen by the soul's suffering, is witness to things it should not see."

Just then there came one of the deep movements which Anthony had noted more than once; the ocean's scum seemed to heave under the moon. Tom Horn's hand touched Anthony's arm and held there; his voice fell to a whisper.

"It is very deep," he said. "Oh, quite deep! I never sounded it. The life below is monstrous. Ask God that the sight of His work be kept from your eyes."

Then the man went quietly back to his post in the bow; and Anthony continued to pace and watch until Corkery came on deck to relieve him. The wind held all through the night, languid, hot, and of not a deal of weight; but it bellied the sails and added its urge to the drift of the current, and the schooner slowly approached the group of broken ships.

It was past daylight when Anthony appeared once more; despite the mist that enveloped the vessel, he became aware of a vast loom to his larboard; it was huge, dark, rearing; he hastily stepped across the deck, and there found mademoiselle.

"It is a ship," she said; "we must have come alongside it in the night. Mr. Corkery thinks it's one of the wrecks we were watching yesterday."

Corkery, hearing Anthony's voice, approached.

"I have made fast to her," he said. "It's a large vessel of a kind I do not know, and she seems to lie quite still."

"We have reached one of the outer vessels of the group we saw yesterday," said mademoiselle. "I do not think we have gone among them, for we have collided with none."

"True enough, mademoiselle," said Corkery; "with sun-up I think we'll see your word made good."

But it was still early; the mist clung to the ship, to the surface of the sea, poisonous, thick; through it the lanterns

burned a feeble yellow. The vast timbers of the vessel at whose side they lay were rotted and dripped with slime; they could feel open seams, gaping like mouths; when they spoke their voices came back from it hollows as though from a cavern. They felt chilled, and their spirits ran low.

Tom Horn, much to the surprise of mademoiselle and Anthony, appeared at breakfast: it was the first time he had sat down with them since the *Roebuck* entered the Sargasso; he had kept the deck night and day, and what little food he 'd eaten had been taken to him by the cook. He had one of his charts with him and unrolled it upon the table.

"In an hour the mist will lift, and we shall be able to see," said he. "And this," his finger pointing to a spot among the figures and signs upon the sheet," is *what* we shall see."

The girl and the young man leaned forward and studied the chart; but the figures told them nothing.

"The vessel alongside can be none other than the *San Josef*," said Tom Horn, "and next her should be the Dutch ship of the line; then comes the Salem merchantman whose goods served me so well while I was captive here, and then the ancient galley whose deck was so rotted that I never ventured to stand on it. Then there follow others, ship on ship," the pointing finger moving slowly across the chart; "I know them all, and could number them as one numbers the shops and houses in a street."

"Except the new ones," said Anthony.

"Hah!" said Tom Horn. "The new ones to be sure. Here and there you find a new ship—and wedged in where you would never expect her. It's as though the fear of the place came upon them; they dread being outside, alone, and force their way among the others for companionship and protection. The Salem ship was a new one while I was here;

and yet she had gotten herself between the Dutchman and the galley—two very old vessels, indeed.”

“But where,” asked mademoiselle, “is the *Rufus Stevens*? In what part of this sea are we to look for her?”

“We do not know what winds hastened or hindered her,” said the clerk. “Hulks pitch slowly along through the sea and may be many months going a short way, or their movements may be quickened by steady winds. I have considered all that is possible, and I have put the possibilities into figures; the *Rufus Stevens* is surely here, but she has been here no great while,” and the man’s eyes kindled with their strange glow. “No, she has but lately arrived; we shall find her somewhere on the edge of this concourse, and at no great distance from where we are now lying. My calculations are close, and I have held in mind, not only the winds, but the power of the great circle; she must have drifted much as we have sailed, and this day should show us many things.”

They ate their breakfasts and studied the chart, while Tom Horn expounded it; and while they were so engaged the sun worked its uncertain way through the mist; with banners fluttering and deep banks whirling, the fog broke before the lances of light; and strange things appeared upon the face of the sea. The broken ships were seen huddled in the still waters, some on level keel, other stern down and bowsprit pointed at the sky, others with stern high and down by the head. Green slime streaked their rotting planks; pale, horrible-looking fungus grew thickly upon rails and housing; flocks of vulture-like birds rested upon them; the sea all about was massed with decaying weed and timbers.

“It is as I thought; it is the *San Josef*,” said Tom Horn, when they reached the deck. He pointed to the vast wooden wall which arose, sheer, alongside them; up and up it went, and Anthony counted three great decks; the stern towered

like a castle, and had been pierced by a dozen windows; the huge sides grinned with ports where brass cannon had once threatened the stout English sea-thieves. Traces of fire were about her timbers; the fungus growth seemed all that held her together.

"Taken, looted, and burned," said Anthony. "A treasure-galleon, like as not, and the prey of a Cumberland, a Drake, or a Morgan, years ago."

Next the *San Josef* was a great Dutch ship; she was almost as tall in the stern as the Spaniard; her timbers had been splintered by the shot of some ancient battle, but the strength of her great dowels and cunningly wrought frame had kept her corpse whole. Beside the Dutchman floated the Salem merchantman, a sturdy ship and a swift one before fate overtook her, but small compared to the lumbering fighting craft of an older day. The galley spoken of by Tom Horn lay almost submerged; the green slippery planks of her bow stuck tragically out of the scum.

"If I could convince myself that it were possible," said Anthony, his eyes upon this craft, "I 'd say she was of the Mediterranean, for there 's been no galleys in the Atlantic these many years."

"She once wore a great beak on her stem," said Corkery. "See where it 's been sawn away."

"Don John of Austria fought the battle of Lepanto with just such craft," said Anthony, "and before the fight he ordered the ram to be cut from every ship in his fleet, so that they might run close longside the enemy. But that was two hundred years ago."

"I would not take one day of it from this vessel's age," said Corkery, shaking his head. "Like as not she 's one of the stove-in hulks that drifted out of that old fight. But how did she make her way through all the seas and get lodgment here at last?"

“God knows,” said Anthony. “And that’s an answer that must be made to many a question asked of this strange place.”

“Look!” cried Tom Horn.

“Look, oh, look!” cried mademoiselle.

Their voices arose almost together; Anthony and the mate turned, and there, freely riding the scum in an open space, the stumps of her masts showing above the bulwarks, they saw the fine, sound hull of the *Rufus Stevens*!

XLII

YES, there she rode, as calmly as though at anchor in the river; the very paint looked new upon her; she was clean and whole and undismayed.

At once Anthony ordered out a boat and put three of the seamen in it; then, with mademoiselle, he also got in and headed through the mass of litter toward the ship. It was laborious pulling, but stout sweeps and strong bodies accomplished it, and within an hour they stood upon the vessel's deck.

Some six feet remained of her mainmast; the others had broken shorter; her hatches were fast, with tarpaulins and battens on each; here and there the bulwarks were broken, but the deck was as tight as on the day she was launched.

"Get the hatches open," said Anthony. And, while the three seamen employed themselves in ripping off the battens, he got a lantern and kindled a light. And while mademoiselle lowered it, at the end of a line, into the throat of the mainhatch, Anthony went down another line, after it.

Dry! He took the lamp in his hands and looked about. By God, it was so dry there was dust on things! Here were some bales of silk, now. Oh, yes, dry! They could n't be more so. And, God save us, how perfect the scantlings were! they were like bones they were that free of wet. And how tightly the cargo was wedged; there was not the least sign of shifting anywhere that he could see. He called the news up the hatch, and mademoiselle cried out her joy. The other hatches were now off, and the light poured in. It was

wonderful the way things were! Amazing! He went climbing over the cargo and down into its timbered crevices. As tight as a drum! Quite the tightest shipful of stuff he 'd ever seen. The man who stowed this had his wits about him. He was an excellent workman, and knew how to prepare for the long pitch of the Indian Ocean; he had taken time in hand, and set himself to guard against the Atlantic's storms. Oh, yes, a tight cargo; wedged like a cork in the neck of a bottle. Not a cask, not a bale had budged since they had been swung into the hold at Calcutta.

Of all good things, so Anthony thought, as he sat on a mound of goods and looked about, the touch of a skilful hand is best. The cunning turns, the clever artifices! Here was work that had been done to admiration. The man who could stow a ship like this could write a great song; for he had music in him, bold music, of a kind you could sit and listen to, and that would put you to wondering about fine things.

The hold was a great, wide belly filled with rich food; and it was deep as a mine. Woven silks and raw! swathed in strong wrappings and bound by cords. Opium in chests, with delights and curses written on their lids; dyes, gums, spices, rare fabrics. Shawls! fine cashmere shawls, soft and warm and beautiful, woven in that far-off valley, of the fine under-hair of goats. A pair of them would bring five hundred Farakhabad rupees at Amritsar, and four times as much in any Western port. And carpets: soft, thick, rich! with the markings on the bundles telling tales of far-off peoples and places; skins; made leather; indigo; shell-lac. Wondrous stores of these. Then more silks; piece silks in patterns, a commodity swift to sell, and holding profits that had made many a trader rich.

Anthony climbed out of the hold, his head heavy with wonder. He saw now why Charles Stevens had dreamed

and talked of this shipful; for it was a cargo that would be counted rich by a mercantile house made up of princes.

The captain's cabin was fast; they forced it. Here were certain weighty chests, locked and sealed; there were empty brandy-bottles on the floor and full ones in a cupboard; the place was foul of drunkenness; and rage arose in Anthony as he looked about.

"What serves it to build sound ships if beasts are to master them?" he said. "No storm that ever blew would have disabled this vessel in the waters she was in if a sober, clever man had managed her."

He tried to imagine what had happened. But he was sure of one thing only: the great storm had come between the pirates and their loot.

"The ship was abandoned," Anthony told himself, "but not at the time set down in their plans. They quit her at some lull in the storm, thinking they'd be safer in the boats. The brig I saw poking among the bars and shoals off the Jerseys was the vessel which they had elected to salvage the *Rufus Stevens*, if all had gone as they wished; her business along the coast was in the hope that the ship's wreckage had been driven ashore at some lonely point and that they might at least profit by that."

He took the vessel's papers and the log-book from a metal box; then he and mademoiselle sat at an open window in the main cabin and searched them carefully. The sealed chests were declared to contain vessels of wrought gold, jewels set, unset, and matched, and inlaid wares of crafty make. And while they sat there a breeze began stirring and gave a gentle motion to the ship. About two hours had passed and they were deep in talk, when they heard Corkery's voice, and, going on deck, they saw the schooner, lowering mainsail and jibs, and close alongside. Corkery and Tom

Horn came aboard, and Anthony went over the ship with them.

"As sound as a nut," said the mate, late in the afternoon, when they had done. "If her masts were in her I'd not hesitate to ship as her mate for a voyage round the world."

"A mast is needful," said Tom Horn. "A tall mast that will reach the high drifts of air. She'll be quick then, and this sea will slacken in power over her. She'll have life of her own, and, well guided, she'll escape."

Next day they came back to the matter. In all that sea they'd come through, said Anthony, he had not seen a sound spar, and he feared one would be hard to come by. To this Corkery agreed; vessels that found their way into the Sargasso were not likely to carry such matters as masts. But, if it must be done, there was the *Roebuck's* mainmast, a stout stick of timber, over-small for a ship of the tonnage of the *Rufus Stevens*, but one that would give service. Anthony shook his head over this; he had no fancy for two crippled ships. Said Tom Horn:

"The great drift of water is to the east and then to the south. Sound spars are apt to be found only on ships newly come into this sea; and all those come as the *Rufus Stevens* came, from the northeast."

So, when the mist lifted its barriers and the gloomy stretch of sea was visible, Anthony began searching the east and northeast; rank on dismal rank stretched the green, fungus-grown hulks; the water in places seemed to lift itself in solid waves of rotting grass. But no sign of a standing mast was anywhere. As there was a possibility of one, unstepped or broken off, lying upon one of the decks, the mate took a boat's crew and set off; they were gone until night-fall and returned unsuccessful. Next day Anthony took up the venture; for hours the men strove with the thick sea and

drifting wreckage; Anthony clambered from hulk to hulk; but he returned as Corkery had done, defeated. A week went by; in a few days there was a light wind, and the schooner, with all sail set and the *Rufus Stevens* towing astern, made some small way around the crowding wrecks. But the last of the week saw Corkery chance upon a stout mast adrift amid the weed; by deal of effort it was brought alongside the ship and hoisted on board. With an adz and an ax Anthony trimmed the heel of the timber into the required shape; and Corkery served the stump of the *Rufus Stevens* in a way that would be like to meet it. With a pair of spars erected as sheers, and blocks and lines, the mast was swung into place and lashed firmly to the stump, the braces were hauled taut, and the cleats made fast about the heel. By the afternoon of the next day the spars and sail were in place; also a bowsprit had been rigged and a pair of jibs added to the spread of canvas. By the following noon a sluggish wind had both vessels moving. The short spars and ill-fitting sails of the *Rufus Stevens* gave her a slovenly look; but Anthony felt like a prince as he stood at her wheel and guided the great hull through the scum and desolation of that gloomy place.

"Keep outside the hulks," said Tom Horn, "well outside, and you 'll have no great odds to contend with. You are now in the current; it moves slowly here, but will grow swifter later on. Days and weeks will pass, and all the time you 'll seem to be burrowing deeper into this region's rotting heart; you will sicken as I did, but keep hope with you, for the end will be good."

Days did pass; and weeks passed, also. Each morning came the same: the banks of mist rearing from a sea to sky, a thin light seeping through, and then the first sparklings of the sun, and a wind that set the tendrils and banners of the fog a-tossing. Sometimes the direction of the breeze was favor-

able; the sails flapped as the grudging measures were poured into them, and foot by foot the great ship took her way. The sun traveled hot and red across the sky; the files of dead ships hung steadily upon their quarter. The filthy, vulture-like birds hovered about with hideous expectancy. And night settled, dark, silent, filled with a choking miasma, or burning with brittle stars, and with a quiet moon, spreading a corpse-cloth over the sea.

The *Roebuck*, with Corkery aboard, kept in the van; her sails took more of the wind, and her narrower bulk slipped along with greater ease. Then, well into one quiet night, they rode into clear water; Tom Horn heard the sucking pull under the ship's foot and raised a cry; the wind had a snapping vigor and smelled clean; there was a feeling of fine, leaping life in the world. And then morning came dancing toward them across the white, tufted seas; the vast, shining expanse lifted and lowered; and the spotted sky raced over them like charging horses.

"God's sun!" said Tom Horn. "God's sky, and God's sea! There is that in a man's soul which will always be the saving of him, if he trusts to it and keeps himself from fear."

After they had their breakfast, Anthony fixed their position by the sun; a few fair days sail would lift the Cape Verdes into view; so, signaling Corkery, in the schooner, he turned the ship west by a trifle south, meaning to skirt the Sargasso and fall into the sea roads traveled by ships working north from Rio or the Far East.

The sails drew badly and were hard to manage; nevertheless, the vessel made good time. The *Roebuck* kept her well in view, stepping along under shortened canvas; at night the mate would draw the schooner off; but at daylight he'd creep up once more. One morning when Anthony came on deck he noted Tom Horn forward, with the glass, holding it steadily upon a point almost due west.

"A sail," said the clerk; "a spot only, and standing just above the line."

There was that in his voice which caught Anthony's attention: the man's hands were shaking; his face was gray.

"We 'll meet many vessels from now on," said Anthony. "We are coming into the track of them."

But Tom Horn said nothing, holding the glass leveled. Another fifteen minutes lifted the sail into plainer view.

"She is a brig," said the clerk, "and, by her build and manner of wearing her rigging, she's American." He was silent for a few moments more; then he held out the glass very quietly to Anthony and said: "It was a brig we saw prowling off the coast of the Jerseys when we were there, I think."

Anthony took the glass and picked up the approaching vessel. She was brig-rigged and slackly kept; her dress of sails was shabby and patched, but the morning light caught and held in a foretopsail that was white and new.

XLIII

MADEMOISELLE LAFARGUE was reading at one of the windows of the main cabin when Anthony came in. He went to the arms-chest in one corner, threw up the lid, and stood glowering into it. She said nothing. He took out a musket, examined the lock, and snapped it; and he did the like with a half-dozen more. Then pistols: he carefully laid them upon a settle in a row—cold, shining, deadly; he loaded them, and the muskets, too.

Then she spoke.

“Something has happened,” she said.

“There is a vessel ahead that I have reason to mistrust,” said Anthony. “A slatternly-looking ship; the same that I saw going up and down the coast before you sent for me.”

She put down her book and arose.

“They have found us!” she said, but she said it without a deal of fear. “What a strange thing, in all these seas, to have come to this one place!”

“It was no chance,” said Anthony, scowling; “it is not in nature to hit a thing off as precisely as that.”

“You have suffered,” she said; “you have suffered a deal, and dared more; and now you are in a new danger when you thought to win safely home. I am sorry.”

Yes, she was sorry; he saw it in her eyes. She was wistful, too, and it pleased him. To have a beautiful woman think so of one is no mean thing. But this was not all, and he continued to look at her. Sorrow did not make her hold herself so proudly; wistfulness did not keep her eyes so

level; and neither of them gave her manner that serene sure quality.

It was confidence. His heart quickened as he understood: danger had come again, but nowhere in her mind was there a doubt but he 'd make through it; she had no thought but that he 'd keep her safe. Her silence was saying a thing to him any man would be proud of; and his mind was still listening to it when he heard voices hailing the ship, and the creak of blocks from very close at hand.

They went upon deck. It was crisp and blowing; the waves were short and tufted with white; the light gleamed on the sea; and the blue swept overhead and down into the west like a great cascade. The stranger brig was lying, with flapping sails, directly in their course; there was nothing for Anthony to do but throw his own ship out, and the two drifted and rose and fell within speaking distance. Tarrant stood at the rail amidships, a sneer upon his handsome mouth and victory in his look. Blake was near him. Both were watching the ship, and Blake's laugh came ringing over the water.

"Now hold to that," he said, "and we 'll be aboard of you directly."

Anthony heard a splash at the stern of the brig; they had launched a boat. Two men pulled it around to the vessel's side, and Blake prepared to step into it. Anthony took up one of the muskets, and looked to its flint and priming; then he balanced it upon the high bulwark before him.

"If you value your peace of mind, you 'll keep your distance," he said.

Blake gazed at him with a deal of good humor.

"What," said he, "are you still of the mind to carry yourself so?" Then, looking past Anthony, he roared with laughing. "So help me God!" he said, "it's mademoiselle! Well struck, sir! Mademoiselle, I congratulate you on a

champion who keeps his pose, no matter how events point or carry."

Tarrant spoke, a bitter look in his face. Anthony could not hear the words, but the gesture motioned Blake into the boat, quite plainly. And the young men called across the place between the two vessels:

"Tarrant, if that man attempts to board me, I'll have his life."

With the same sneering, bitter look, Tarrant faced the ship for a moment, not stirring nor speaking; Blake, never heeding Anthony's words, leaped into the boat. Then a man appeared on the brig's after deck—a man who held his head well up and stepped with the sureness of a great cat. Anthony, the musket still on the bulwark before him, stared at sight of him.

"Captain Weir!" said mademoiselle. Her hand held tightly to Anthony's sleeve.

"How does he come aboard that vessel?" said the young man.

"He has ventured out, looking for us," said mademoiselle. "He is our friend."

There was a deep look in Anthony's eyes, as he frowned across the stretch of water between the two vessels.

"Yes, he is our friend," he said. "But still I ask, how does he come on board this ship, of all others?"

After a short word with Tarrant, Weir came to the brig's side and hailed the *Stevens*. Anthony replied.

"I desire to come aboard you," Weir said. They saw a smile on his face, as he added: "Have I your permission?"

"To you," said Anthony, "there is no objection. You will be welcomed."

Weir waved his hand, still smiling; but when he ordered Blake out of the boat his face was stern enough. After the pirate climbed aboard, Weir was seen standing bold upright

before the two; and what he said to them must have cut like a whip, for Blake shrugged and turned away, and Tarrant lowered ill-favoredly.

In a short space Captain Weir stood upon the *Rufus Stevens's* deck; he bowed to mademoiselle and shook Anthony by the hand.

"A most fortunate meeting," he said. "I've searched these seas for weeks in the hope of finding you."

"Why?" asked Anthony. "And what brought this particular region to your mind? And how did you come in this brig?"

It was a story soon told. The captain had been away,—at Boston—at New York—and there were several other places,—all on the business of the house of Stevens. And when he returned he visited Anthony's lodgings in Sassafra Street; but Anthony had gone. He had been gone for some time. The captain then went to Pump Court; but Tom Horn was absent, also.

"Then," said the captain, "I thought of Christopher Dent, and went to his place, feeling he'd have some news to tell. But he would say little. He seemed to cuddle what he knew up in his mind and was as close-mouthed as a man could be. Yes, you were away from the city. He thought you were very far away. Tom Horn, too, was gone; he fancied Tom was with you, but as to that he was not sure. There was something in his manner that put an edge on my attention; and so," said Captain Weir, with his cold smile, "I questioned him in ways he was not used to, and in a little he let slip the fact that mademoiselle, too, was gone, that you had all taken ship and were venturing somewhere at sea."

"Poor Christopher!" said mademoiselle.

"As honest a soul as ever lived," said Captain Weir, still with the cold smile. "And, having got so far with him, I spoke of my close association with the house of Stevens, of

my friendship with your uncle," to Anthony, "of my regard for yourself. I said your problems were mine; anything having to do with the business was for me to know; if an effort were being made that promised help in the firm's difficulties, I should be told. And then he told me."

"And then?" said Anthony.

"The chance that took you away," said Captain Weir, "seemed mad and slim; but, for all that, I set myself to get a ship and make after you."

He made inquiries at the exchanges, and almost at once heard of a brig, newly come into the river from a trading-venture along the coast.

"A trading-venture!" said Anthony, his eyes narrowed.

"Yes," replied Weir. "They said little about it; and, as they seemed disinclined to speak, I did not question them. The vessel was ready, provisioned, and manned; and as Tarrant is a good officer, and had voyaged with me more than once, I settled my terms, stepped aboard, and we made sail."

"In Tarrant you may have an excellent seaman, and in Blake the same. I'll not gainsay their skill," said Anthony. "But you have also in them two hectoring, damned ruffians whom I would trust with neither my throat nor my purse."

Captain Weir smiled, and seemed in no way troubled.

"I know Tarrant of old," he said. "And Blake's name and doings are common things. But they can handle a ship, and that's enough for me. If I'd kept from the sea every time a bully lifted his snout at me, I'd been a landsman all my life. Never bother yourself about this pair; for as I know them, so do they know me, and if they speak at all in any matter of importance, their voices will not be above a whisper."

Anthony took note of Weir—a careful note; and for the first time he saw in him the man old Rufus had chosen years before to master the ship he was giving up. And this note,

too, had in it the suggestion of a wilderness cat, not only in the step but in the body's posture. The merchant captain who had won through hostile fleets with his goods, and beaten off attacking vessels of war, was in the steady, cold, green eyes; the red edges of the cutlass-stroke down his face spoke like lips of the deadly fighter who closed instantly with his foes; his manner was the still top of a vast depth of resolution, lashed up only on occasions. And Anthony looked at him; away at the back of his mind odd thoughts were forming.

All three vessels now dressed their idle sails to the wind; the brig followed the schooner and ship. Corkery, having had news of Weir's presence, paced the schooner's deck contentedly.

And mademoiselle was glad the captain was to remain on board the ship. For they had been so short-handed. Anthony and two men were not enough to handle that great vessel, for all her meager spread of sail; and the ship must get home safely. She must! for she carried the means of slackening the law's processes and easing many hatreds. The captain smiled when she said this. Anthony would have managed very well; there were few that would have ventured, as he had ventured, into that lonely sea, so feared and cursed by sailors, and whose place in the world's waters was so vague that no two charts gave it the same position. Oh, yes; Anthony was a man to carry a thing through when once he had begun it; and the captain's eyes were very cold and very steady, indeed, as they fastened upon the young man on the forward deck, adding his weight to a seaman's, hauling away on a line. And mademoiselle found herself looking at those eyes, so like hard, green agates; and she felt something like fear creep upon her.

They had breakfast. During its course, Tom Horn said never a word; indeed, he had not spoken since Weir had

come into the ship; he ate and stared and listened, and sometimes he sat quite still, his eyes on the captain, and a queer down-drawn twitch to his lip. Weir gave them what news he had of the port; and Anthony laid out the ship's papers for him to see.

"Excellent traffic!" said the captain, over the items of cargo. He sipped his small glass of brandy. "Oh, excellent! Your uncle knew the East; he seemed to feel the levels where the rich things lay. It was a kind of genius with him. Here we have a shipful of value such as no other merchant could have collected." He finished the brandy. "And all in good condition, you say?"

Anthony had the hatches off after breakfast; and Captain Weir saw the merchandise for himself. He came out of the hold and dusted his fingers and clothes with a kerchief.

"It could not be snugger nor better," he said. He looked at mademoiselle. "Yes, we must get her safe, supercargo; no chance must take her from us now."

The wind kept brisk for days, and it blew the three vessels before it; then it shifted and came out of the northeast with a shrill cut, a whipping of the water, and a racing of clouds. The schooner and brig stripped close to keep in the crippled ship's company; and Anthony, with Weir's help, added more braces to the makeshift mast. One morning, at dawn, after a blowy night, and with the Barbados somewhere ahead, they saw the brig tossing away to the south and the schooner nowhere visible. All that day the gale lashed and raved and drove into the southwest; the sky was like lead and seemed to touch the wild waters. In the first dog-watch the ship, slow to mind her helm, was struck by a great sea; the man at the wheel was washed overboard, and Captain Weir was dashed against one of the boats and carried below with a broken leg. And so Anthony was left to work the ship with one man, for Tom Horn had little power in his body and no

sea-going skill in his hands. For three days and nights the young man slept only while mademoiselle held the wheel at quiet spaces in the storm; he kept sail to the vessel, and ran her, upright, before the shock of the wind. Then the storm died down, and the sea raced itself out; and Captain Weir, stretched on his bed, gray with pain but with steadfast eyes, said:

“Is the brig still in sight?”

Anthony bowed, and, grim and tired, stood in the cabin doorway.

“She’s hung to us like a limpet,” he answered. “I’ve said a deal against Tarrant and Blake, and I feel I’ll say more. But they can manage a ship, and they keep to their purpose; and I trust God Almighty will hold those things to their credit when they finally stand before Him, stripped and sorry and ashamed.”

Captain Weir eased his hurt leg, held tight between bits of scantling.

“You need sleep,” he said to Anthony. “You cannot work the vessel yourself, with a single man. Get a message to the brig; have them send two hands aboard of us.”

Anthony frowned.

“I have no liking for that ship, as you know,” he said. “And I’d rather keep her people from my deck.”

“Is it not time to put our dislikes aside?” said the captain. “Should we not think of the ship, and what getting her home means? Have we any fear of two foremast men, no matter what vessel they come out of?”

Mademoiselle was at the wheel when Anthony came heavily on deck. The ocean was heaving in long, smooth swells, green and wonderful. A signal was made to the brig, and the two vessels bore toward each other. It was Blake whom Anthony spoke to; and when he asked for the men the pirate laughed cheerfully and agreed. He came with the boat, his

big body laid against the tiller-handle; and it was he who caught the rope flung by Anthony and made it fast; and the two men, able-looking fellows and active, came nimbly over the side.

"Good fortune," said Blake, as he cast loose, and made away again. "Your mast still stands, and you 've seen the worst weather you 're like to see. With this wind we look to convoying you to your dock in less than ten days' time."

Anthony pointed the ship to the northwest; as level as a gull's flight, the blunted bowsprit held to Henlopen. Then he gave the wheel to one of the new hands and pointed to the compass.

"Hold her so," he said.

Captain Weir asked to be brought upon deck; he lay on a mattress under the stump of the mainmast, his leg straight and stiff and dead-looking; and ready to his hand lay a pair of loaded pistols.

"Now," said he to Anthony, "you may get some rest, all of you. I keep watch on deck until you 've slept the clock at least half around."

Tom Horn stood at the foot of the companion-ladder when Anthony came below; the man's face looked wan in the half-light, and the pale glow of his eyes had the cold melancholy of the moonlight.

"The deck," said he, "is held by the brig's people. And the brig is not your friend."

"Captain Weir is there," said Anthony tolerantly.

"Are the hawks to be trusted when the swan come down the wind?" asked Tom Horn mildly.

"The captain will see to us," said Anthony.

Mademoiselle, worn and faint from the long battle with the storm, stood by.

"The captain is hurt; he is held fast to his bed," she protested,

"He will hear," said Anthony, dull with sleep. "An old fox, and with the blow of a bear. The brig will not approach while he is there; never fear."

"But," said mademoiselle, a vague dread in her heart, "if she should? If the men on deck should overpower him?"

"Then," said Anthony, "I shall hear. For all I am so full of sleep, I'll be keen enough, if wanted."

He went into his cabin, and in a moment they heard the cords of his bed straining under his weight as he threw himself down.

"How tired he must be!" said the girl. "Day and night he fought for our lives. Oh, I trust there will be nothing more to try him."

"Hark!" said Tom Horn, as he held up his hand and she listened. There was a creaking of blocks, a humming among the cordage, a crowding of wind into the sails. And the seas were heard leaping monotonously at the great prow like running wolves at the throat of a buck.

"It is the wind and the sea," said Tom Horn. "There is no evil in either in this region. But evil may ride them, as one may ride an honest horse to do a wrongful deed."

Mademoiselle's eyes widened, but she said nothing.

"We are in clean seas," said Tom in his hushed voice. "God's sky is over us, and we've kept our way through many dangers. But we've taken from the Sargasso what it claimed for its own; and a curse will reach from a long way off if the spirit in it be very bitter. Everywhere in that strange sea is the stink of evil; wrong springs up like lush grass; horror takes shapes that even God had not foreseen." His voice went to a whisper. "But in the months I was there I came to know the great truth: I learned that the world, the sea, and the wind went round and round, never stopping; and the knowledge of this law helped me to make away from my captivity." He shook his head, and

the mild look of a child was in his face. "But the Sargasso had claimed me, and one day it found me out; the winds carried its curse to me, and it was then that its haze came between me and the world."

In the forecastle the sailorman who stood so courageously with Anthony through the storm slept soundly. And now mademoiselle, weary beyond thought, went to her cabin and also slept. In the late afternoon light Tom Horn kept the deck like a quiet wraith; the seamen from the brig held the ship upon her course with an easy hand; gray of face, and with eyes hot with fever, Captain Weir lay without movement, the brace of pistols beside him; to the south the brig, under scant sail, bounded like a checked hound.

And Anthony slept. Fatigue had unbraced and slackened his body; he had sunk so deeply into the strange place of sleep that only the stirring of his heart kept him in the world. His mind received no impressions; his nerves were still; and he lay at a great depth for a long time. Then he arose to the lower level of dreams; he had a dull, formless sense of himself; then he realized other things and gradually came to speculate upon them. Feet raced across the vault of heaven; the corners of the world were straining; there was a thundering as of wind in many sails; great voices lifted against each other like blades.

But this passed, and he sank again; darkness held him; he did not move. But light will creep through the scum of a tarn; it will brighten dull, still water; it will plunge its shining arm deep into the muck and bring up those living things which have only heard the first faint whisperings of the world. A sound once more lifted Anthony from the pit; again he lay at the dream level, and the sound broke urgently over him. It had a dim, mournful insistence; he could not bear it; all the trouble God permitted seemed in the sound; and his heart raced in pity and desire. His

spirit struggled heavily; but his body had no footing in the world; it lay like the dead. He suffered keenly. The call broke in shrill waves through the gray place of sleep. He was wanted! Somewhere—some one needed him. Bitterly he strove upward; he fought as a dark angel might have fought, under the foot of Michael; he raved and cursed and fought upward from level to level; the vagueness fell from him like rent veils. He burst through the gates of sleep. His body leaped up.

It was mademoiselle who was calling.

"Anthony! Do you hear, Anthony? Oh, do you hear me?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I hear." Like a dull-witted bear he pawed at the latch of his door. "What is it?"

"They are on deck," she said. "I am locked in my cabin. I have been calling you, but you would not waken."

"Who is on deck?" The door would not give, and he wrenched at it savagely. "Who locked you in?"

"Tarrant. And Blake. They came aboard in the night. They have taken charge of the ship."

Anthony's wits came to an edge; he stopped wrenching at the door, and stood, calling its possibilities to mind.

"What of Captain Weir?" he said. "Where is he?"

"I do not know," said mademoiselle.

Anthony fixed upon the spot where the door had been fastened, and laid his weight against it. The nails started, and the ironmongery gave way. Then he released mademoiselle, and she was trembling.

"I was afraid," she said. "You slept so, you seemed very far away. I was afraid."

He held her close to him.

"There is rare courage in you," he said. "Call it out; make it stand by you."

"I am not afraid now—for myself. But you 'll be going on deck. I'm afraid for you."

The light was dim where they stood; but he looked into her eyes, and there seemed a fine brightness through the world.

"You fear for me because I am your man," he said to her. "Is it so?"

"Yes," she said, quietly.

He put her hair back from her brow and kissed her there.

"I am satisfied," he said. "You belong to me. And, because of that, there is nothing in life that shall harm you."

He went into his cabin, and he came out with a brace of pistols; one of them he gave to her.

"Stay here," he said, "and keep this by you, in case of need."

Then he went to the companion-ladder, and at the foot of it he paused. For there were voices on deck; one of them was Captain Weir's, and it was thick with anger.

"Let us have no more words," the captain was saying. "I have my own thoughts about any matter in my charge, as I've told you more than once before. I warned you not to come aboard this ship and that I would tolerate no interference. It is now daylight; get into your boat, go back to your vessel, and take Blake with you."

It was Tarrant who answered.

"You are injured," he said. "It will be many a day before you are up and active. And, as what is to be done should be done quickly, the need is too great for us to leave the vessel without—"

But he was stopped by a burst of bitter cursing. Softly Anthony went up the ladder, and he stopped again when his eyes were level with the combing. Weir had lifted himself to his elbow; his face was twisted with pain, and he

held a pistol leveled at Tarrant, who stood, sneering and disbelieving, before him.

"Over the side," said the captain. "Over the side, and into your boat. I've warned you I'd one day split your skull with a bullet if you continued to cross me!"

"In your condition," said Tarrant, "it is best not to worry. Above all, do not worry about me. I am in a fairly settled state of mind here; and I think—"

Cold, deadly, with an ugly twist at one corner of his mouth, Captain Weir looked along the barrel of the pistol and fired; Tarrant, with his hands at his chest and death in his face, fell. As Anthony leaped upon deck there came a second shot; the pistol dropped from Weir's hand, and he stretched back upon his bed.

Blake blew the smoke from the muzzle of his weapon, and viewed the two bodies.

"Now," said he to Anthony, "here's a state of affairs. Here's a cutting down of a ship's company. Two gone to the devil as quick as you'd wink your eye."

But Anthony gave him no attention; he went to Captain Weir and saw he was beyond all aid: to him the words of Weir had been the words of an honest man, resolute in his defense of the right, and Anthony's heart tightened in his chest. But, seaman-like, he looked first at the trim of the sail and then at the compass, which told him the ship was headed far out of the course he had laid down.

"Northwest!" he growled to the helmsman. "Point her that way, and hold her so."

The man's look mocked him, and there was no move to obey; so Anthony drove a blow into his face that spun him away from the wheel. Grim and lowering, the young man set the ship on her course. And while he did this Blake stood leaning with his back to the rail and looking vastly amused.

"Now, by God!" said the pirate, "you are the most satisfactory fellow in the world. One need never cudgel his brains about you; you do precisely the thing expected of you."

With his chin out and a scowl on his brow, Anthony looked at him.

"I hope to be able to say something the same of you," said he. "For I expect you, with no loss of time, to lower a boat and take yourself and your two men out of this ship."

The sun stood red on the eastern edge of the ocean; the wind blew freshly, the ship held upon her altered course, and the sea ran crisply beside her. The brig was frolicking a league away.

Blake shouted with laughter.

"Good!" said he. "Splendid! If heaven had only sent you among a group of play-actors, what a man you'd have been! I'd have enjoyed seeing you, for comedy deliciously played is a rare thing."

With a turn of the wheel Anthony brought the ship to, and, as she stood with her sails muttering, he called to the two sailors who stood together in the waist, one stanching the flowing blood of the other:

"Hoist out the yawl! You'll have a more peaceful time in your own vessel, so you're going back to her. Be lively now!"

He fingered the trigger-guard of his pistol; the seamen made haste to free the tackle of a small boat; and Blake laughed louder than ever.

"Never tell me this is to be the piece you played on board *Le Mousquet*!" he said. His big chest swelled with mirth, and his fists drummed upon it. "Well, God sends us good luck now and then, for all. But I'd say one word to you; I would presume no more. Play it as you did before! For," and he shoved his head forward, "do you recall the

price I once put on the pleasure of hearing and seeing you? My two thumbs!" He smiled at Anthony, and beneath the good humor there was a gleam of the tiger. "My two thumbs!"

"I remember," said Anthony. "And, also, I see the boat will be launched all the swifter if you lend a hand. And it will be better for you if you spend some of your good humor in getting safe out of my sight!"

There were about two yards between the two men; Blake leaped it with a swiftness that took Anthony by surprise. The pistol roared wrathfully, but the pirate was holding its muzzle upward; then the two closed.

"Now," said Blake, "we shall see how high you'll hold you hand and head. By God, I'll dress you! I'll make you step!"

Dour, silent, Anthony drove a short, stabbing blow at the man's face; a spurt of blood followed it; and Blake was smiling through a crimson mask.

"Well struck," said he. And as he said it he beat Anthony about the body with a power that made the young man's breath catch and his ribs bend. Gasping, Anthony gave back.

"What!" jeered Blake, "so soon? Is this the man who talked so highly? Is this, indeed, our famous fighter?"

But Anthony had the two seamen in mind; and, while he avoided Blake, he looked toward the waist. The men had let go the boat's tackle and, each armed with a belaying-pin, were hurrying aft. He must beat Blake down before they got in hand's reach; if he failed, he was lost. And the pirate was pressing forward, his face a smear of blood but his laugh persisting.

"Where are the thews I've heard so much of?" he mocked. "Your body is big enough, but it has no more guts than a drum. Stand to, and I'll—"

But Anthony was on him like a wolf. A terrible blow on the side of the head stopped Blake's jeers, and he rocked on his feet; another one down below, and the life was wheezing out of his throat. Blake closed; his great arms wound about Anthony; the young man strove with all his power, but he could not escape. He heard the hurrying feet of the seamen behind him; then came the voice of mademoiselle, high-pitched, almost a scream.

"Go back!" it said. "Go back! I'll fire if you take another step."

Anthony forced Blake around, and so saw the length of the deck forward, over his shoulder. The girl, her eyes blazing, her hair loosened, stood between him and the sailors; she had the pistol he had given her, and it was lifted menacingly.

More time! What a girl! And time was what he needed then; just a little time. He dug his elbow into Blake's throat and so shut off his breath; the frightful blow on the side of the head had weakened the man; but let him fight his way through this phase and he would recover. Viciously the elbow dug deeper; with his great chest empty, the man let go; his aimless feet took him back a step, and then the whistling blows smashed into his body, and he fell.

Panting, torn, his face black and threatening, Anthony turned upon the two men.

"Hoist out the yawl," he said.

With his own weight added to the lines, the boat was swung out and lowered. Blake, broken and unconscious, was put into it, as was the body of Tarrant; then the seamen pulled away toward the brig.

And when they had gone the *Rufus Stevens* was put into the wind once more; and Anthony, leaning against the wheel, said to mademoiselle:

"That is the last."

“Oh, I hope and pray it is so!” she said.

He took a shining strand of the dark, loosened hair in his hand and kissed it; and she clung to him and looked up at him. And the winds of the ocean stirred about them and filled the sails; and the great ship, for whose safety they had endured so much, bore them slowly homeward.

XLIV

THE warehouse of Rufus Stevens' Sons stood on the water-front, huge, square, and with many windows. There was no rutted road here, with its scum of foul, black mud; stones were set in smoothly and solidly. The row of brick arches opening into the warehouse were high enough to admit a laden dray. Anthony stood in the mouth of one and looked in. The place was like a dim vast cavern packed with riches and filled with aromatic smells; porters, draymen, and clerks moved about in the half-light like gnomes; never before had Anthony been so impressed by the complete meaning of order, routine, spaciousness, wealth.

The wharves of the firm were heaped with cargo; three square-riggers were tied there; windlasses turned; seamen chanted as they threw their weight against the bars and swung the merchandise up from the holds. Anthony looked from the ships, with their abundance and ordered labor, to the warehouse and its repletion and thought of that day one half-year before—the day the *Rufus Stevens*, under her makeshift mast and ill-fitting sail, rounded the bend in the river, amazing all who beheld her.

And that wonderful cargo! That shipful of riches! What Charles had dreamed of it came true; for there was the house of Rufus Stevens' Sons once more set squarely upon its foundations; there it stood, fixed, settled, strong, with no man to speak a word against it.

For that part of its past, foul with villainy, was canceled.

And its future was bright and long. And there was peace, and there was honor, and there was prosperity.

Anthony went to see Charles at his house on Ninth Street on a snowy Sunday evening. And he found him wrapped comfortably in a rug before the library fire, reading a play-book. Charles smiled and shook the young man's hand.

"It is pleasant to sit here," he said, "and read and look at the fire and think how safe things are in your hands."

"How are you?" Anthony asked.

"I am better. Oh, I am a deal better. You need not be afraid," and he smiled and patted the young, strong arm. "I am back from the darkness for good and all. But here I'll sit, Anthony, in the company of my books, while the house of Stevens moves under your hand. Here I'll sit quietly and with nothing to disturb me. I'll lead a rich life in this room, by this fire; a rich, full life, with companions like this to amuse me," and he riffled the leaves of the play-book.

"Your books," said Anthony, gratefully and wistfully, "thank God for them!"

Charles smiled, and again he patted the young man's arm.

"Your grandfather never concerned himself with books; and you are a deal like him. But they would store your mind and make it rich," he said. "You would do well to encourage them. Those rakehells of the Restoration, now, would amuse you, if your taste runs to their kind. You'll find them there on the second shelf, next to the fireplace. Or, if you'd rather take a step back, the Elizabethans are just below, and they are a crew that'll shake your soul or your ribs, just as you'd have them. And those Italian tale-tellers were shrewd workmen—there, in the pigskin, right under your hand. But, if you think you'd care for romance

nearer to this present day, there is Defoe's narrative of the shipwrecked sailor, and also Fielding's amusing chronicle of life as he's seen it in his own England."

There was an array of pudgy little books with stout leather backs upon a shelf quite low in the case. Anthony stooped and took one out and opened it. The eyes of Charles sparkled.

"Voyages!" said he. "That one, I'll wager, is Bartholomew Diaz. How often I've sailed with him, as a boy, to the mouth of the Great Fish River! And there is fine old Vasco da Gama! Many a summer afternoon, and I at school, he and I have doubled the cape, put the complaining pilots in irons, and thrown their quadrants into the sea. And Columbus, and Cabot, and the Merchant Adventurers' Company! There's a rank and file for you, if you want actual deeds and fine accomplishment: Hawkins and Drake, Davis and Sir Humphrey Gilbert; and that never-beaten Yorkshireman, Martin Frobisher.

"Yes, here I'll sit in this excellent company," said Charles, and he smiled and patted Anthony's arm. "I'll have nothing to disturb me. I'll lead a rich, full life in this room, Anthony, God bless you; rich and full, and with not a regret in all the world to throw either myself or my friends out of humor."

Christopher Dent sat in his back room, his spectacles on his nose, and a big book in Latin text upon his knee. A cheery fire crackled in the stove; two candles burned upon the table; and a number of other books, each as big as the one Christopher held, lay beside them. Outside the yellow flare lurked the retorts, the rows of bottles, and jars full of pent-up possibilities. Tom Horn sat upon a bench near the stove; he rubbed his knees in the warmth as the little

apothecary looked at him over the edge of his spectacles.

"In none of the elder tongues," said Christopher, "is there much to do with the sea. As you say, the ancients were wise; they had a knowledge of many strange things, but they seldom ventured far from land, and the sea, as we know it, was a darkened thing to them. So, knowing nothing of its secrets, they could scarcely agree with what you say. Bear in mind," said Christopher earnestly, "I am not denying; I only announce a lack of authority in the ancients."

"The sea," said Tom Horn in his hushed voice, "has a meaning. It is more than a mass of water, washing around in the hollows of the world."

"I grant you that," said Christopher readily. "I grant you that much active principle is in the sea; it holds many vital elements crystallized and in solution. Soda, for example, is the cinder of sea-plants; and without this friendly alkali we'd many times be brought to a stand. The ocean gives rare and agreeable substances to materia medica, and in time, as we plumb its depth, it will give more."

But Tom Horn shook his head.

"I have watched the sea with the sun on it," he said, "and I've watched it running through the night. Hurricanes blow over it and make it leap and rave; but hurricanes die down, and the sea goes on. It is always muttering," said Tom Horn. "I've listened to it, hour after hour; it's always muttering over something it's hidden. But it never tells; it keeps its secrets well." He looked at Christopher for a long time, and then said, "Captain Weir was buried in the sea."

"Poor man," said the little apothecary. "Poor man, to rest away in the silence of the ocean's depths!"

"The sea is always muttering," said Tom Horn. "I've listened to it hour after hour; it's always muttering over

something it 's hidden. But it never tells; it keeps its secrets well."

The graveyard was beside the quaint brick church; a low wall inclosed it, and in June-time rose-vines climbed it and shook their wonders in the wind. It was a well-kept churchyard, orderly and unfrequented; in the cold months the snow covered the quiet graves gently; in summer-time the grass was very green.

In a far corner of the wall was set the stone shaft to Captain Weir. Though his body had been buried at sea, here sober thoughts of him would be kept by his fellow-citizens. Cut deep into the base of the monument were the words:

To the memory of Isaac Weir, once master in the Merchant Marine. He was a Steady Friend, and a Faithful Servant, and Died at last in Defense of Justice and the Law.

"A true word," said Anthony, as the last thing had been spoken, dedicating the stone to future generations. "A true, fair word."

"As honest a man as day ever lit a path for," said Mr. Stroude, solemn of face and beaver hat in hand. "He could ill be spared."

Mademoiselle said no word, but put a great bunch of blossoms at the foot of the stone; and there were tears in her eyes.

"His was a strong hand," said Christopher Dent. "And a brave spirit. I mind well how he insisted that I give him the facts that sent him away to sea and to his death. A friend was in peril, and he must go to him. A splendid, high resolve for any man."

Tom Horn stood silent and said nothing at all; and Mr. Sparhawk, dapper, with more the look of a wise old bird than ever before, took a careful pinch of snuff. And neither

did he have any words in the matter, but put the snuff-box into his waistcoat pocket and listened considerably to the sayings of his neighbors.

There had never before been such a ship as the *Rufus Stevens*. The Siddons yard, in that springtime, had hummed with her making; such a hammering and sawing as there had been, such a chipping and shaving, and boring and fitting, the clever old place never saw before. The keel was of solid, seasoned, toughened oak, as surely fitted, as strongly braced as old Rufus' spine had been. And to this grew the ribs, powerful, graceful, bent cunningly, to waste the impact of the sea, and to give space to her cargo. Then the beams went in to brace the frame; mighty, weighty, strong beams of live-oak that was like iron; beams that had been nursed and molded and cut to fit by shrewd joiners. Live-oak had been Charles's highest demand; live-oak that had been felled in proper time and seasoned in the sun and rain and wind. The stem was made of it—a great cutting stem that would throw the seas lightly apart; the stern-post was of it, and also the transoms, aprons, knight-heads, hawse-timbers, and keelson; and it was all clean and without defects. And, when she had been launched, how the workmen swarmed in her; how her masts reared when set in place; how wide and smooth and clean her deck was! What enormous yards and sails!

Anthony thought of all these things as he watched her, once more headed south and east, with the Delaware capes on either side, and the ocean under her foot. And madame stood by his side. Oh, no, no longer mademoiselle. She was his wife now; and she stood by his side, tall, beautiful, with fine brave eyes; and her hand was upon his arm; and she, too, watched the ship.

"She sails like a hawk," said Anthony. "And Corkery

is a master that 'll take advantage of it. With wind and weather, she 'll dock in Calcutta in ninety days."

And they watched her head away for the Far East, sail over sail, her bow cutting the water and piling it white about her; and they were still watching as she winged away into the depths beyond the ocean's curve.

"God send her safe!" said madame softly. "And God send her back again."

And Anthony patted the hand that rested upon his arm; and there was the deep friendship of one comrade for another in the look he gave her; and there was in it, too, the love of a man for the dear woman he had greatly desired.

"She will return," said Anthony. "She will return many, many times."

"Why are you so sure?" she said; and she smiled.

"When you are with me, my senses seem keyed to unusual things," he said. "I see joy and peace coming down the wind, and there 's a wonderful singing from far-off places."

And madame laughed and held tighter to his arm, and looked up at him, and loved him.

THE END

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